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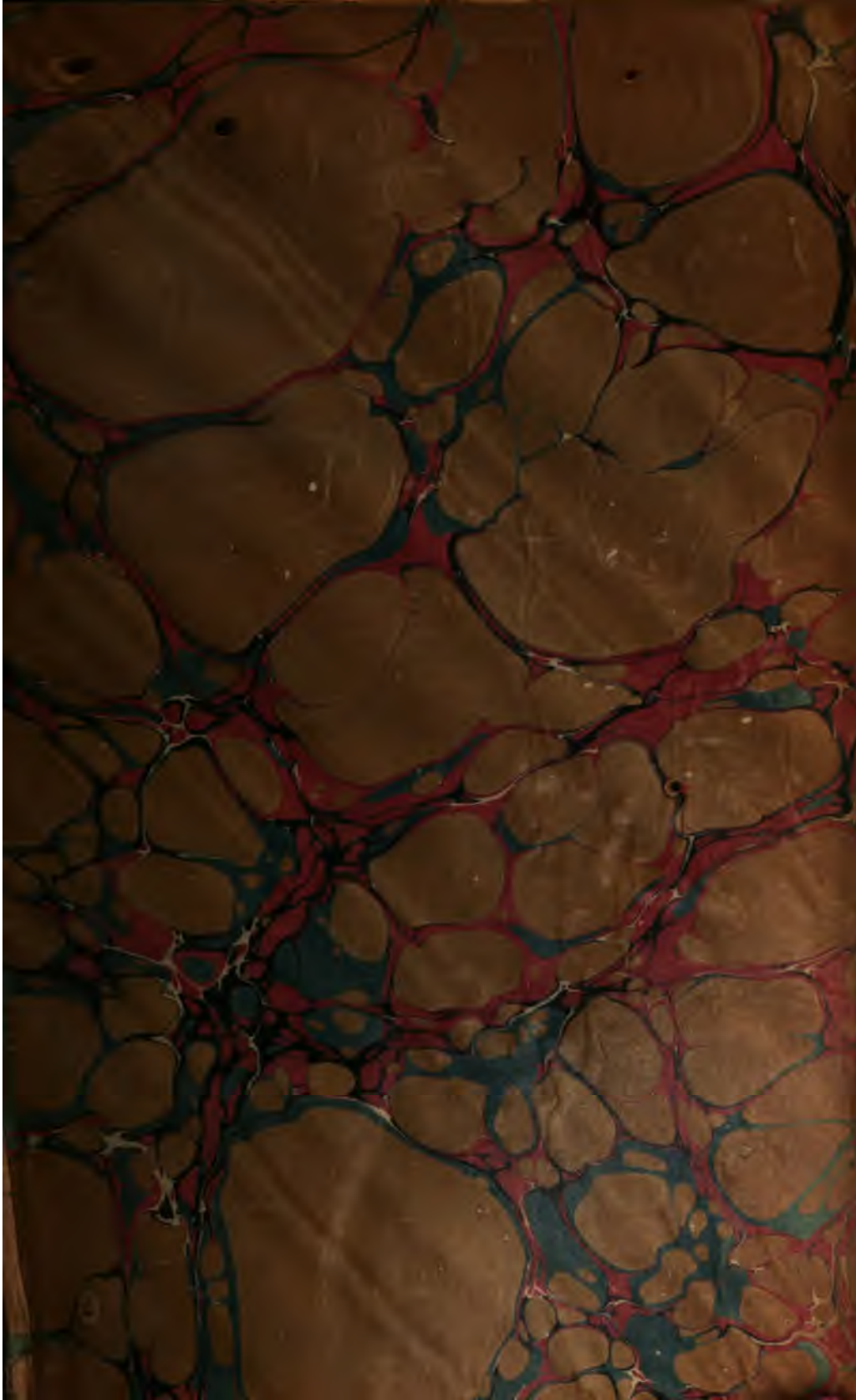


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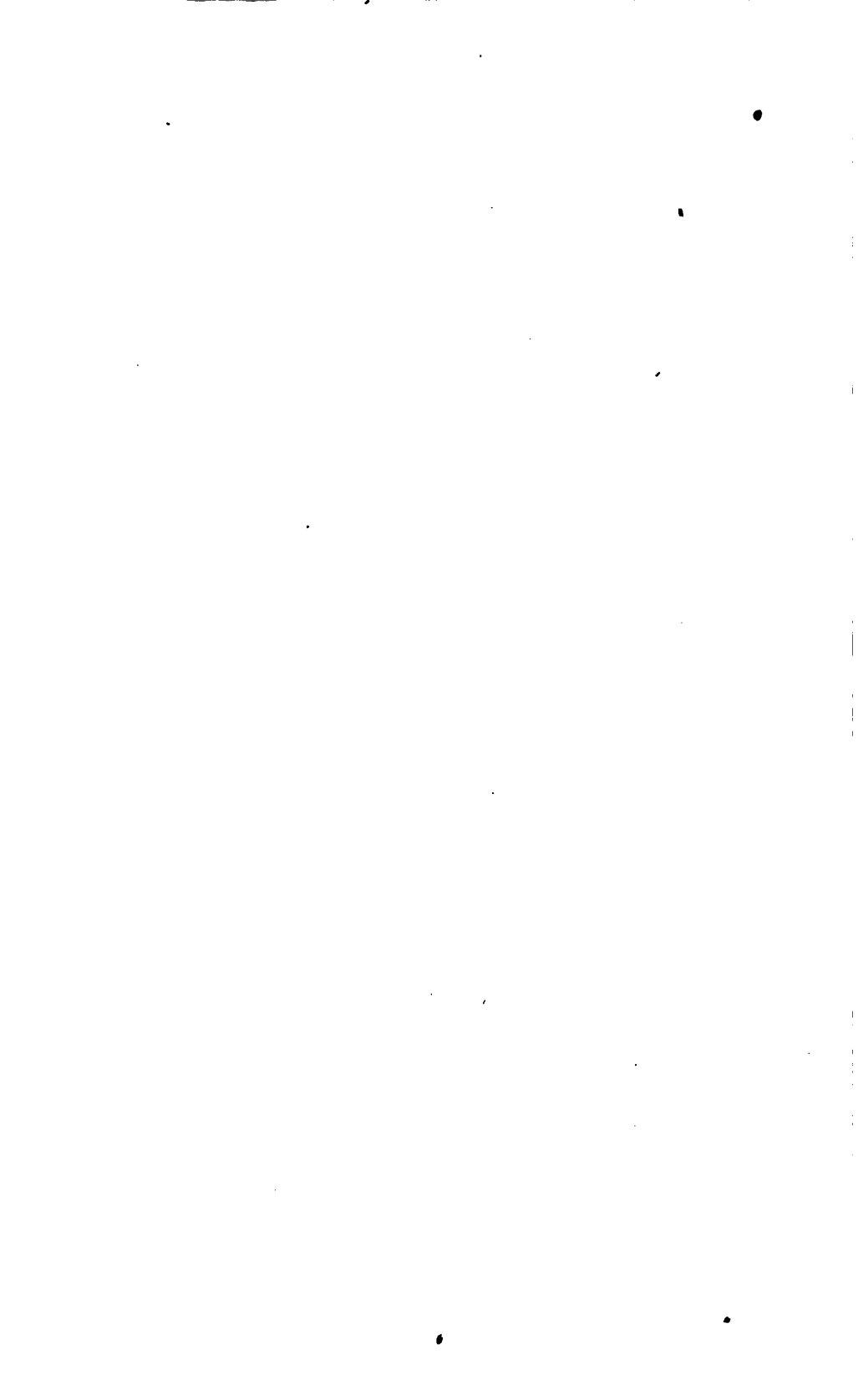
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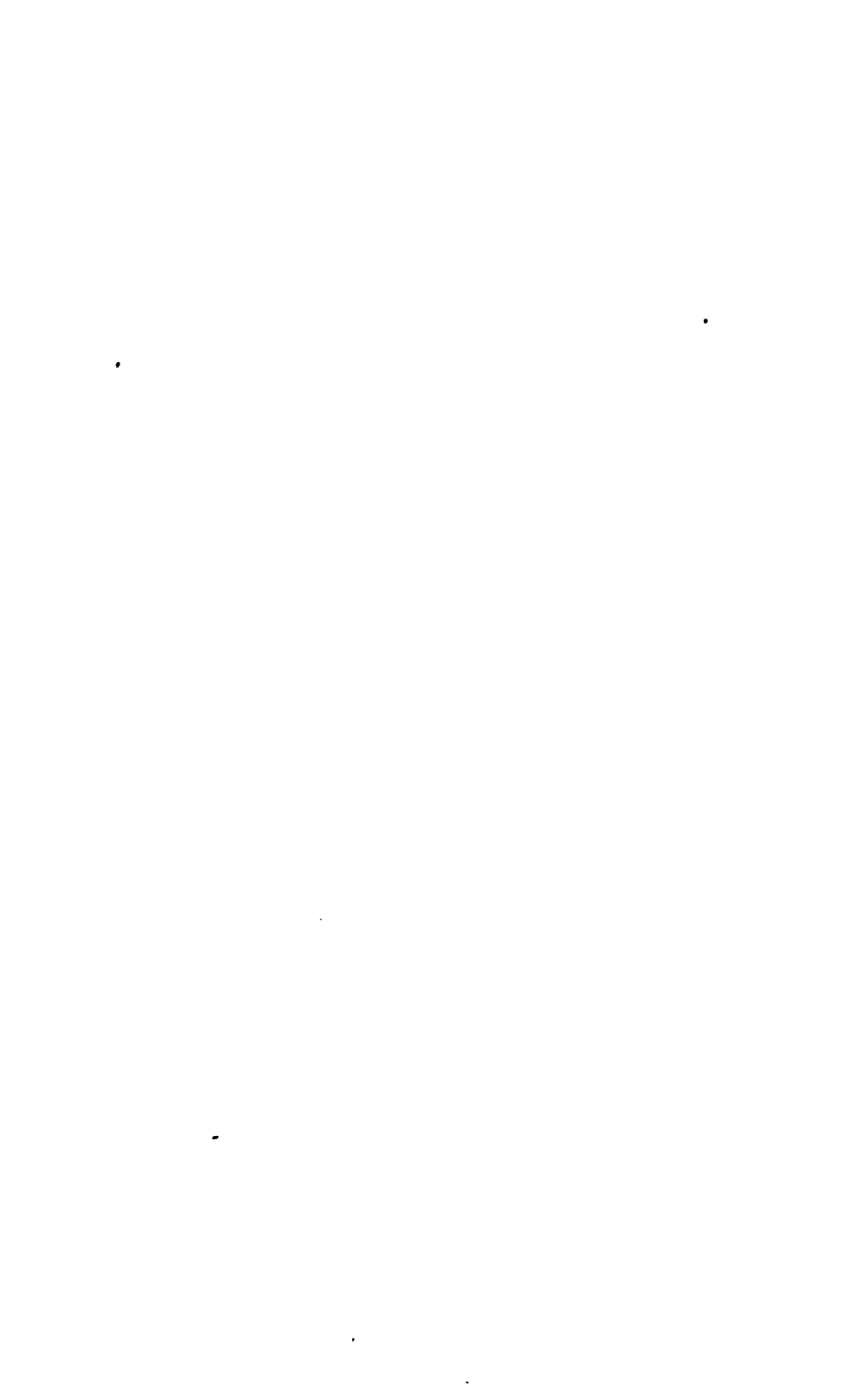
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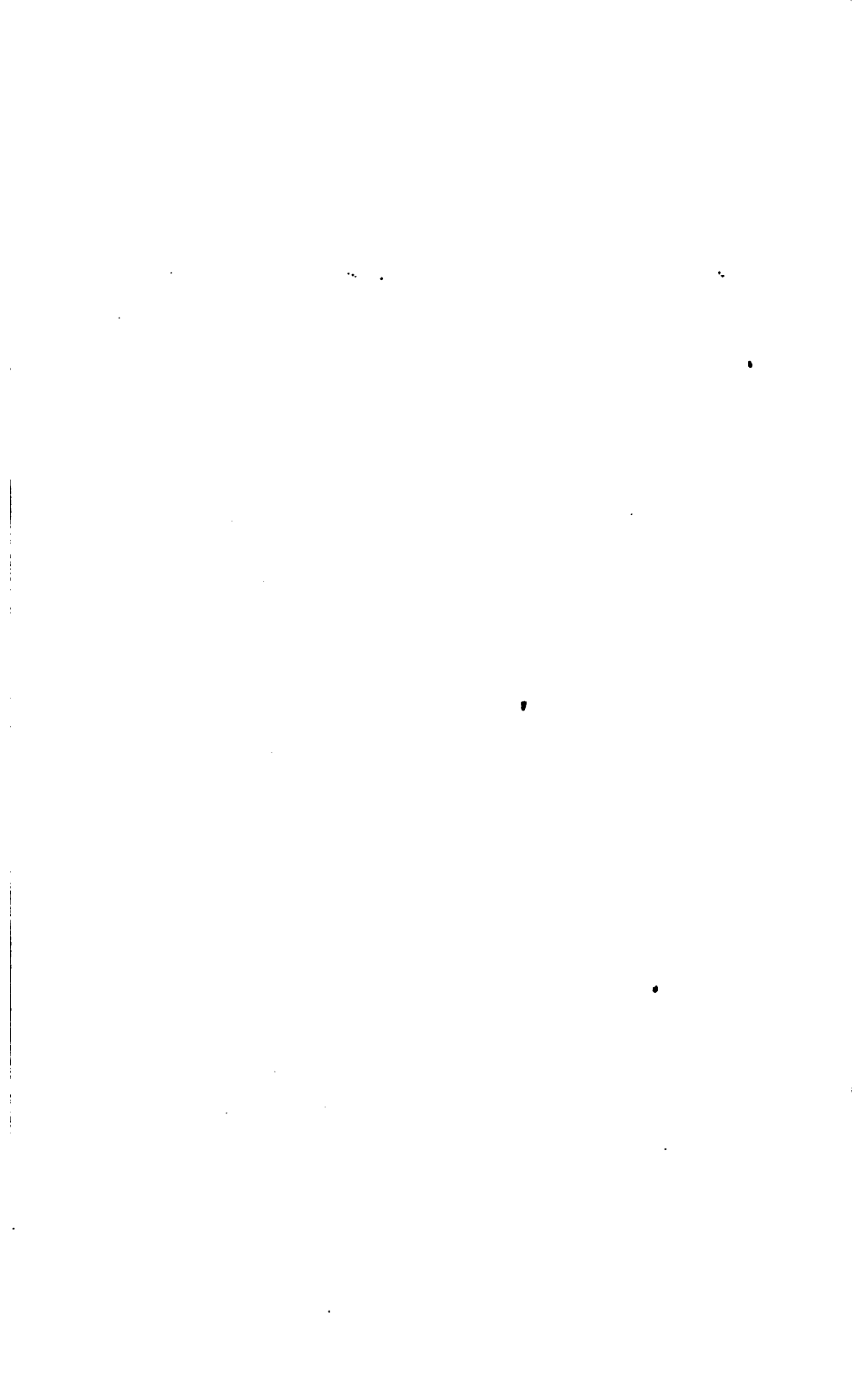












EXPOSITORY NOTES,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

E. B. Hallworth

THE NEW TESTAMENT

OF OUR

LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST;

WHEREIN THE

Sacred Text is at large Recited,

THE SENSE EXPLAINED, AND THE INSTRUCTIVE EXAMPLE OF THE BLESSED JESUS,
AND HIS HOLY APOSTLES, TO OUR IMITATION RECOMMENDED.

THE WHOLE DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE THE READING OF THE SCRIPTURES IN PRIVATE
FAMILIES, AND TO RENDER THE DAILY PERUSAL OF THEM
PROFITABLE AND DELIGHTFUL.

BY WILLIAM BURKITT, M.A.,

LATE VICAR AND LECTURER OF DEDHAM, IN ESSEX.

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EXPOSITORY NOTES, &c.

OF

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

R O M A N S.

This Epistle to the Romans has always been esteemed by the Church of God one of the chiefest and most excellent portions of holy scripture. The reason why this Epistle stands first, is not because it was wrote first; (the epistles to the Corinthians, Galatians, and Thessalonians, being writ before it,) but either because of the imperial dignity of the city, to wit, Rome, unto which it was directed, or else because of the sublimity of the matter, and the excellency of the doctrine, contained in it, with respect to which some have called it, "The Marrow of Divinity,—The Key of the New Testament,—The Christian Church's Confession of Faith,—and, The most divine Epistle of the most holy Apostle."

The scope and design of which is two-fold; First, To show that neither the Gentiles by the law of nature, nor the Jews by the law of Moses, could ever attain to justification and salvation, but only by faith in Jesus Christ: for the sake of whose merits alone we are accounted righteous in the sight of God. Secondly, To show that faith is not separated from good works, but productive of them; being the parent and principle of obedience, without which whosoever liveth is accounted dead before God.

The subject matter of this Epistle is two-fold; partly doctrinal, and partly practical: in the doctrinal part, which makes up the first eleven chapters, the apostle treats of justification by faith alone, without the works of the law; of original corruption, by the fall of Adam; of sanctification, by the Spirit of Christ; of the calling of the Gentiles; that is, of the present rejection of the Jews, and the future recalling of them when the fullness of the Gentiles was come in.

In the applicatory or practical part of this Epistle, which begins at chapter xii. we have many useful and excellent exhortations, both to general and particular duties, respecting God, our neighbour, and ourselves; and several encouragements given us to the love and practice of universal holiness.

CHAP. I.

In this first chapter our apostle (after salutation given) proceeds to his principal design and scope, namely, to assert and prove the grand doctrine of justification by faith, that is, by believing and obeying the gospel of Christ: and that no person, either Jew or Gentile, could possibly be justified by any works of their own.

As to the Gentiles, he shows in this chapter, That their works were so far from justifying them before God, that they were an abomination in his sight; that, for rebelling against the light and law of nature, God delivered them up to their unnatural lusts, which exposed them to unutterable and inevitable condemnation, (as the close of this chapter will inform us,) and this as a just judgment and righteous punishment for their sins.

PAUL, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.

Observe here, The author and penman of this epistle described: 1. By his name, Paul. Before his conversion he was called Saul, then Saul the persecutor; after his conversion he was Paul the professor, Paul the preacher, Paul the great doctor of the

Gentiles. O wonderful power of the heart-changing grace of God! which is able to turn Sauls into Pauls; persecutors into professors; faithless sinners into faithful servants of Jesus Christ. Observe, 2. He is described by his general office; a servant of Jesus Christ: an higher and more honourable title than that of emperor of the whole earth. *Servire Christo est regnare*: to serve Christ, especially in the quality of an ambassador, is a greater honour than to have the monarchs of the world to serve us, and bow the knee before us. Observe, 3. He is described by his particular office, *Called to be an apostle*; that is, constituted and appointed by Christ to that holy function, without any merit or desert of his own. He did not assume the honour of an apostle till called; and when called, it was not any desert of his own, but the free and undeserved grace of God that called him. Observe, 4. That as he was called to, so is he said to be separated for, the great work of preaching the gospel: *separated unto the gospel of God, that is, set*

apart in the purpose and decree of God; *separated from his mother's womb*, Gal. i. 15. Immediately and extraordinarily called by Christ himself to this great work, *Acts ix. 15.* and mediately by the officers of the church, *Acts xiii. 2, 3, &c.* The work of dispensing the mysteries of the everlasting gospel is to be undertaken by none but those who are solemnly *separated* and set apart for it, and regularly called to it. I would to God the herd of lay-preachers at this day would consider this. These usurpers of the sacred function can neither pray in faith for a blessing upon what they undertake, because they have no promise to bottom their faith upon, nor can the people expect to profit by what they hear from them; for this would be to expect God's blessing out of God's way. Read with trembling what God says, Jer. xxiii. 32. *I sent them not, neither commanded them, therefore shall they not profit this people at all.* Where mark, that the people's not profiting by these men, is not charged upon their false doctrine, but upon their want of a call and commission. It is not said, that their doctrine is *unsound*, but they preach *unsent*; therefore they shall not profit this people at all. These men contradict the command of God, the universal practice of the Christian church, violate the rules of order and right reason, and expose a most awful and tremendous ordinance of God to contempt and scorn; yea, lay it open to the bold presumption of every ignorant and impudent pretender. Observe, 5. The glorious title given to the gospel, which St. Paul was called forth to preach: it is here styled the *gospel of God*, and elsewhere the *gospel of Christ*. It is the gospel of God, as he was the author and contriver of it; it is the gospel of Christ, as he is the subject-matter and the scope of it. As Jesus Christ was the sum of the law, so is he the substance of the gospel. Indeed St. Paul sometimes calls it *his gospel*, Rom. ii. 16. because he was the dispenser and promulger of it; it was *Depositum fidei sue commissum*; "A divine treasure committed to his care and trust." And if the gospel preached be the gospel of God, let us entertain it in our judgments, retain it in our memories, embrace it in our affections, hide it in our hearts, confess it with our mouths, and practise it in our lives.

2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.)

That is, which gospel God has promised before by his holy prophets speaking in the holy scriptures. Where note, 1. The

antiquity of the gospel, how ancient that doctrine is, even as old as the prophets themselves; nay, as old as Adam himself. The gospel, or glad tidings of a Saviour, was first preached to Adam by God himself, *Gen. iii. 15.* next to Abraham, *Gen. xv.* then it was predicted by all the prophets which have been since the world began. The gospel which we preach can by no means fall under the charge and imputation of novelty: it is no new or modern doctrine, but almost as old as the world itself: *Which gospel he had promised before by his holy prophets.* Behold then a great correspondency, a sweet agreement and harmony, between the Old and New Testament, between the prophets and apostles; though great difference in the manner and measure of the revelation. For, as one says, the Old Testament is the *hiding of the New*; the New Testament is the *opening of the Old*. The Old Testament is the *New Testament veiled*; the New Testament is the *Old revealed*. Note, 2. The venerable title given to the scriptures: they are called the *holy Scriptures*. *Which he had promised before by his prophets speaking in the holy scriptures.* The scriptures are holy in several respects. 1. In regard of their author and inditer, the Holy Spirit of God. 2. In regard of the penmen and writers of them, holy men of God. 3. In regard of the subject-matter contained in them, the holy will of God. 4. In regard of their design, to make us holy both in heart and life. And, if the word of God be an holy word, then let it be treated by us with all holy deference and regard. Lord! what an impious liberty do some men take, in this wanton age, to furnish out a jest in scripture attire, and in their jocular humour to make light and irreverent applications of scripture phrases and sentences! They lay their schemes of ridiculous mirth in the *Bible*, and play the buffoons with the most serious things in the world. These men bring forth scripture as the Philistines brought forth Samson, only to *make them sport*; but they shall ere long find Almighty God in earnest, though they were in jest. He that has magnified his word above all his *name*, will not brook it, that any man should make it vile and contemptible, by rendering it the theme of his giddy mirth and profane drollery.

3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. 4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

The apostle having told us in the foregoing verses, that he was particularly called to, and by God set apart for, the preaching of the gospel, in the verses before us he declares that Jesus Christ was the main subject of that gospel which he preached, and describes him by his twofold nature; by his human nature, ver. 3. by his divine nature, ver. 4. According to his human nature he was *made of the seed of David*; that is, descended from David, and one of his posterity by the mother's side, who was of that house and line, *according to the flesh*; that is, the weakness, frailty, and mortality, of his human nature. Where observe, 1. That our Lord Jesus Christ had a being, even an eternal existence, before his incarnation, or manifestation in our flesh and nature. He was the Son of God, before he was the Son of man; hence he is said to be *made of the seed of David*, intimating that he was then *made* what he was not before. In regard of his divine nature, he was *begotten, not made*; but in regard of his human nature, he was *made, not begotten*. Observe, 2. That Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, did in the fulness of time assume the true and perfect nature of man into a personal union with his Godhead; the human nature was united to the divine nature miraculously and extraordinarily, by the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost, *Luke i. 34, 35.* and also integrally and completely; that is to say, Christ took a complete and perfect human soul and body, with all the faculties of the one, and all the members of the other, that thereby he might heal the whole nature of that leprosy of sin, which had seized upon, and diffused its malignity into every member, and every faculty.

Next, we have a demonstration of Christ's divine nature, ver. 4. *Declared to be the Son of God with power, &c.* As if our apostle had said, that our Lord Jesus Christ, though according to the faculty and weakness of his human nature he was of the seed of David, yet in respect of that divine power of the Holy Ghost which manifested itself in him, especially in his resurrection from the dead, he was *declared to be the Son of God with power*; that is, mightily and powerfully demonstrated so to be. Learn hence, 1. That the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, by the Holy Ghost, is a powerful and convincing demonstration that he was the Son of God. Christ *as man* is nowhere said in scripture to be the Son of God, but with relation to the divine power of the Holy Ghost, by whom he had life communicated to him from the Father, both at his

conception and at his resurrection. At his conception he was the Son of God, by being conceived by the Holy Ghost; but this was secret and invisible, known only to the mother of our Lord. Therefore at his resurrection, *by the Spirit of holiness*, that is, by the immediate power of the Holy Ghost, God thought fit to give a visible and public demonstration to the whole world, that Jesus was his own Son, the promised and true Messias, and consequently did thereby give testimony to the truth and divinity of our Saviour's doctrine and miracles. God did now publicly own his Son, in the face of the whole world, and freed him from all suspicion of being an impostor or deceiver; for it is not supposable, that God should put forth an almighty power to raise him from the grave, if he had by robbery assumed that glorious title of the Son of God, therefore saith the Father of him in the morning of the resurrection; *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*: that is, in the words of our apostle here, declared and made thee conspicuously appear to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Yet observe, 2. That though Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God's Holy Spirit, yet did he certainly raise himself by his own power as God, according to his own prediction, *John ii. 19, Destroy this temple of my body, and in three days I will raise it up*: and according to St. Peter's assertion, *1 Pet. iii. 18, Being put to death in the flesh, in his human nature, but quickened by the Spirit*; that is, by the power of his Godhead, or divine nature, quickening himself; for had he been only raised by the power of God, and not by his own power, how could his resurrection have been a declaration that he was the Son of God! What had more appeared in Christ's resurrection than in other men's! for they were raised by the power of God as well as he. But here lies the difference; Christ rose by a self-quickening principle; others are raised by a quickening principle derived from Christ, with respect to which he is called *resurrection and the life*, *John xi. 25.* that is, the principle of quickening life, by which the dead saints are raised. Observe, 3. That the apostle doth not say, Christ was made or constituted the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead, but declared so to be: *Multa tunc fieri dicuntur quando facta esse manifestantur*, according to the phrase of scripture; "Things are then said to be when they conspicuously appear." Nothing can be more evident than that Christ was the Son of God before his resurrection; yea, before

his incarnation, being the Father of eternity, *Isa. ix. 6.* But the glory of his divinity was much clouded, darkened, and eclipsed, by the frailty of his humanity, by the miseries of his life, and the ignominy of his death. But by his resurrection God rolled away his reproach, and freed him from all the aspersions and accusations of his enemies, who charged him with blasphemy, for affirming that *he was the Son of God*: and thus our Jesus, in whom we trust, was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: 6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. St. Paul declares the person from whom he received authority to be an apostle, namely, Christ himself: *By whom he received apostleship*; that is, by Jesus Christ, mentioned in the foregoing verse; who called him immediately, and furnished him with authority and ability for a gospel preacher, even then when he had been a furious and fiery persecutor. Observe 2. He declares how free and undeserved a favour this was: he acknowledges he had received grace to be an apostle; intimating, that to be rightly called to be an apostle, or messenger of the gospel of Jesus Christ, is a special act and instance of divine grace and favour: *By whom we have received grace and apostleship.* Observe, 3. What is the special office and duty of an apostle, and the great end and design of that honourable function, namely, to call all persons to believe and obey the gospel. Learn thence, That the great end of the ministry of the word is to bring sinners to believe and obey the gospel of Christ, to persuade them to yield, not a professed subjection only, but a real obedience also, to the gospel of Christ: *by whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations.* Observe, 4. How the apostle puts the Romans in mind of their condition by nature, before the gospel was revealed to them, and received by them: they were then Pagans and Heathenish idolaters, but now Christians, or the called of Jesus Christ, among whom (that is, among the Gentile nations) ye are also the called of Jesus Christ. Learn thence, That it is a necessary duty for ministers, and a profitable duty for the people, to put, and be often put in mind, of what they were and are by nature; it is profitable both to increase their humiliation, and also

to excite their gratulation. "You Romans (as if the apostle had said) who are now the called of Christ Jesus, were once afar off, even amongst the vile and cursed Gentiles: let the remembrance of what you once were, keep you continually humble; and the knowledge of what now by grace you are, render you for ever thankful."

7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Two things are here observable, 1. The general inscription of St. Paul's epistle; and next, the particular salutations therein given. In the inscription, we have the persons described to whom the epistle is directed; and that, 1. By their place of abode and habitation: *To all that be at Rome.* Thence note, That Rome, though now a grove of idols, a nest of unclean birds, yet was once an habitation of holiness, a receptacle for the saints and dearly beloved ones of God. Rome, that is now a lewd and impudent strumpet, was once the chaste and holy spouse of Christ. Behold, the grace and favour of God is not confined to place or person! The Lord is with you while you are with him, and not longer. 2. They are described by their title: *Beloved of God, saints, and called.* Where note, The order of their titles; first *beloved of God*, then *called and sanctified*; intimating, that the love and grace, the favour and free good-will of God, are the source and spring, the root and original causes, of all blessings and benefits; namely, of vocation, sanctification, and remission, &c. *We love him, because he first loved us*, 1 John iv. 10. The love of God is the cause of our holiness, and our perseverance in holiness will be the preservation of his love, John xv. 10. *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.* Question, But how could the apostle call the whole church at Rome *saints*, when doubtless there were many hypocrites among them? Answer, 1. They were all saints by external communion and visible profession. They were called out of the world, that is, separated from the world, and consecrated to the service of Christ, and so lay under a necessary obligation to be true and real saints. 2. They were denominated saints from the better, and we would hope from the greater part, amongst them. Doubtless there were many, very many of them, that answered their character, who were holy in the habitual frame of their hearts, and in the general course of their lives, and from them the whole received their denomination of saints, or

holy. Observe, 2. After the inscription follows the apostle's salutation, *Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Where note, 1. The comprehensiveness of the salutation: Grace and peace comprehend all blessings, spiritual and temporal; grace implies and includes both the spring and fountain of all divine favour, and likewise the several streams which flow from that fountain, all the effects and fruits of grace. And peace, according to the Hebrew manner of speaking, implies all good things for soul and body, for time and eternity. Note, 2. The persons from whom these blessings are derived: from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ; from God as the sovereign and fountal cause; and from Christ as the Mediator of all, without whom we have nothing to do with any of the divine favours; for both grace and peace come by Jesus Christ. And whereas Christ is called Lord, and here joined with the Father, and the same blessings are said to flow from Christ as from the Father; we learn, That Christ is really and undoubtedly God equal with the Father, and blessed for evermore. Question, But why is the Holy Ghost here excluded, no mention at all being made of him? Answer, He is not excluded, though he be not named, but necessarily implied in the forementioned gifts; because grace and peace are the fruits of the Spirit, they come from God the Father, through the mediation of the Son, and are wrought in us by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Besides, in other salutations (though not in this) the Holy Ghost is expressly mentioned, as in 2 Cor. xiii. 13, 14. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you.*

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Observe here, 1. The great and wonderful success of the gospel; it had produced faith in the hearts, and obedience in the lives, of the Romans, which had made them famous throughout the world. Your faith, says the apostle, *is spoken of throughout the whole world*; that is, through all the Roman empire, which at that time ruled over a great part of the known world. The entertaining of the gospel at Rome, made that place more celebrated and famous than all the victories and triumphs of the Roman emperors; faith and holiness make a place and people more renowned than all outward prosperity and

happiness. Observe, 2. That this their renowned faith was the ground, yea, the highest and chiefest ground, of the apostle's rejoicing; *First, I thank my God that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world*; Learn thence, That it is both the duty and the disposition of the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, to be highly thankful to God, above all things, for the powerful success of the gospel, in bringing sinners to the faith and obedience of Jesus Christ. This is our rejoicing, nay, this will be our crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ. We value our lives only by their usefulness to the souls of our beloved people: we live as we see some of you stand fast in the Lord, we die as we see others stick fast in their sins.

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; 10 Making request, (if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God,) to come unto you.

Here we have observable, 1. The apostle's solemn protestation of his affectionate love unto, and great care and concern for, these Roman converts, whom he was now absent from, yea, whose faces he had never as yet seen: *Without ceasing*, says the apostle, *I make mention of you always in my prayers.* Behold here, as in a glass, the face of every faithful minister of Christ; he continually bears his people upon his heart, whenever he goes in and out before the Lord, as Aaron bare the names of the children of Israel upon his breastplate; he pours his very soul in fervent supplications for them, and can sooner be forgetful of himself than un mindful of them. *Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.* Observe, 2. That because the apostle was yet a stranger to them, had never seen them, and it was impossible for them to know the outgoings of his heart toward them, he solemnly appeals to the heart-searching God, calls him to witness how affectionately he loved them, and how frequently he prayed for them; *God is my witness.* The words have the force, if not the form, of an oath, and teach us, that it is unquestionably lawful, in important affairs to swear, to appeal to God, and call him to be a witness of what we either say or do. We find St. Paul did it often, and our Saviour himself did not refuse to answer upon oath, when solemnly adjured. Observe, 3. How the apostle swears by God, not by the creatures, which

is the swearing condemned by our Saviour and by St. James; see *Matt. v.* and *James v.* Note farther, How St. Paul appeals to that God, *whom he served in or with his spirit*; that is, with the apostle's own spirit, with his heart unfeignedly. From whence we may remark, That no service can be performed acceptably to Almighty God, except the heart and spirit of a Christian be engaged in it. True, the body has its part and share in divine worship as well as the soul; but the service of the body is never accepted by God, unless animated and quickened by an obedient soul. O Christian, serve thy God with thy soul and spirit, as well as with thy tongue and knee! and then thy offering will be more acceptable to God than the most adorned temples, the most pompous ceremonies, and most costly devotions whatever, with the want of these.

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established: 12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.

The apostle having declared in the foregoing verses, how fervently he prayed for them, and how passionately he desired to come unto them; he now acquaints them with the reason of that desire, namely, For the furtherance of his own joy, and their establishment: *I long to see you, that you may be established, and I may be comforted.* Learn hence, 1. That establishment in faith and holiness is that which the holiest and best of Christians do stand in need of. Learn, 2. That the presence of the ministers of Christ with and among their people, as well as their preaching the doctrine of faith to them, is absolutely necessary, in order to their establishment; God has joined the duties of public preaching and private inspection together, and woe unto us, if by our non-residence, and not dwelling among our people, or if living with them we haughtily refuse or slothfully neglect personally to converse with them, we deny them one special means for their edification and establishment. Observe lastly, That the apostle desired to be personally present with the church and saints at Rome, for his own benefit as well as for their advantage, *That I may be comforted.* Learn hence, that the ministers of Christ do certainly improve and benefit themselves, as well as edify and establish their people, by their conferring with them; as iron sharpeneth iron, and the rubbing of one hand warmeth another, so the

meaneast of Christ's members may contribute to the advantage of the greatest apostle. God's weak servants may strengthen thy strong shoulders. *Verily I have sometimes gained more knowledge by an hour's conference with a private and experienced Christian, than by half a day's study.* Most certainly the ministers of God are great losers by being strangers to their people.

13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, but was let hitherto, that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. 14 I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. 15 So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

Here observe, How the apostle obviates an objection, and prevents a reflection upon himself. Some at Rome might be ready to say, If Paul had such a longing desire to see us as he expresses, why did he not come all this time and preach here, as he has done at Corinth, and Ephesus, and elsewhere? He truly tells them therefore, that it was not for want of inclination and will, but for want of opportunity; he had often intended it, and attempted it also, but was providentially hindered. From whence I gather, That the ministers of God cannot always dispose of themselves and of their labours according to their own inclinations and desires, but both their persons and ministry are directed and disposed of by the providence, and according to the pleasure, of Almighty God. Observe, 2. The great modesty and condescending humility of our apostle, in telling the Romans, that though he desired and intended to make this long journey to Rome to preach the gospel to them, yet this was rather a debt than a gift. He doth not intimate to them, that his coming amongst them was an arbitrary favour, for which they should be indebted to him, but a bounden duty which he owed to them: *I am a debtor both to Jew and Greek, and ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.* Here note, that the debt spoken of is the preaching of the gospel; St. Paul contracted this debt, and laid himself under an obligation to pay it then; (as every minister doth now at his first entering upon the office of the ministry;) by virtue of his mission, it was his duty to preach the gospel to all, both to the learned Greeks and unlearned barbarians.

From whence learn, That to preach the gospel of Christ both far and near with a laborious diligence, when regularly called thereunto, is a ministerial debt and duty. We are first indebted to God that sends us forth; we are also indebted to the people we are sent unto. But O! how many people are there that would willingly forgive their ministers this debt! but we must tender payment at the time and place appointed, or we can never be discharged, whether the debt be accepted or not.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Observe here, 1. The glorious description which the apostle gives of the gospel: *It is the power of God unto salvation.* That is, the preaching of it is attended by and accompanied with an almighty power, which renders it effectual to salvation, if we do not bolt our ears and hearts against it. Learn, That the plain and persuasive preaching of the gospel is the chosen instrument in God's hand, which he uses and honours for the conveyance of spiritual life into the souls of men, though it be despised and ridiculed by the men of the world. The gospel is powerful, it is the power not of men or angels, but the power of God; not the essential, but the instrumental power, of God; it works as an instrument, yet not as a natural, but as a moral instrument in God's hand, freely, not arbitrarily. The word gives out to us, as God gives in to that; the power of the gospel is not from the preachers of the gospel, therefore do not idolize them; but they are the instruments in God's hand, their words are the vehicle or organ through which the vital power of the Spirit is conveyed, therefore do not vilify and think meanly of them. Observe, 2. The solemn protestation and bold profession which the apostle makes of his not being ashamed of the gospel of Christ; *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.* Where note, 1. He doth not say I am not afraid to preach the gospel, but *I am not ashamed*; because shame hinders our readiness more than fear. A man may be fit and ready to preach the gospel, and yet be afraid to undertake it; but he that is ashamed of the work, can never be fit for it. Note, 2. That when the apostle says, he is not ashamed of the gospel, more is intended than expressed; I am so far from being ashamed, that I account it my glory. As if the apostle had said, "Verily I es-

teem it the highest honour that God can confer upon me to preach the gospel at Rome, though it should cost me my life." O how exceeding well doth a bold profession of the gospel become all the ministers and members of Jesus Christ! Let all say with the apostle, We are not ashamed of the gospel; none of the ministers of Christ to preach it, none of the members of Christ to profess and practice it.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Here the apostle produces an argument to prove that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation; *Because by it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.* That is, the righteousness of the Mediator, called the righteousness of God, because it is of his providing, and of his approving and accepting, and for the sake of which, God pardons our unrighteousness, and receives us graciously. This righteousness is by the gospel revealed to beget faith in men, even such a faith as goes from faith to faith; that is, groweth and increaseth from one degree and measure to another; and thus the apostle falls upon his main proposition, which is the scope and design of this epistle, namely, that there is no possible way for the justification of a sinner, either Jew or Gentile, but by faith in the Mediator. Learn hence, That the righteousness whereby we are justified in the sight of God, is discovered to us in the gospel to be only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the appointed Mediator betwixt God and us; *The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.* The apostle proves this by a citation out of the prophet Habakkuk, *The just shall live by faith*; that is, as the pious Jews in the time of the Babylonian captivity did live and find comfort in their troubles, by faith and affiance in God; in the like manner the apostle shows, that he that is evangelically just or religious, shall live a life of grace on earth, and glory in heaven, by faith in Christ; that is, depending upon the merits and righteousness of the Mediator, in the way of holiness and strict obedience to his commands. Learn hence, That a justified man lives a more holy, useful, and excellent life, than other men; his life is from God, his life is with God; yea, he lives the life of God himself. 2. That whatever life a justified man lives, (in a more excellent manner than other men,) he lives that life by virtue of his faith, *The just shall live by faith.*

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness :

Our apostle having asserted and laid down a general proposition, that the justification of a sinner is only to be expected by the righteousness of the Mediator in a way of faith ; he now undertakes the proof and demonstration of it thus ; he distributes the whole world into Gentiles and Jews ; the former seeking righteousness by the dim light of nature, or the law written in their hearts ; the latter by the works of the law, that is, by their external conformity to what the law of Moses exacted and required of them. Now his present business is to prove distinctly and fully, that neither Gentile nor Jew could ever find what they thus sought. He begins here with the Gentiles, and shows that indeed they had inbred notions of a God imprinted in their minds by nature, and also had the book of the creatures before their eyes, in which much, very much of God might be seen ; yet these common notices of God, and of good and evil, they did not obey and put in practice, but rebelled against the light and dictates of their natural consciences ; for which cause the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against them. Here observe, 1. A dreadful manifestation of divine wrath : *The wrath of God is revealed from heaven.* The wrath of God ; that is, the indignation or vengeance of God. This the sinner shall feel, who doth not fear it ; for the fears of an incensed Deity are no bugbears ; nor the effects of ignorance and superstition, as the Atheists fancy. This wrath is said to be *revealed from heaven*, that is, discovered and made manifest by the God of heaven ; partly by the light of nature, their own consciences giving them notice and warning of it ; and partly by the examples of others, in the lashes of a divine severity on the back of sinners, by the hand of an incensed God : *Thus the wrath of God was revealed to the Gentiles from heaven.* Observe, 2. The object or impulsive cause of his revealed and inflicted wrath ; namely, *all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.* Ungodliness compriseth all sins against God, or neglect of the duties of the first table ; unrighteousness comprehends all sins against our neighbour, or the breaches of the second table. Note here, That the abstract is put for the concrete, the sins for the sinners that commit them ; the wrath of God is revealed against all *ungodliness and unrighteousness of men* ; that is, against all

ungodly and unrighteous persons : the meaning is, that God will certainly punish these sins upon the persons of the sinners. Observe, 3. The special aggravation of these their sins, or that which made them so very provoking to Almighty God, namely, that they *held the truth in unrighteousness* ; that is, their natural convictions were kept down under the dominion and power of their corruptions. Lust in their wills and affections was too hard for the light in their understandings : they entertained the light of truth in their minds, but did not suffer it to have its proper effect and influence upon their hearts and lives ; thus making that a prisoner which would have made them free. Learn, 1. That it is a very great aggravation of sin for men to offend against the convictions of their *own* consciences. 2. That the wrath of God is dreadfully incensed against all those that live in any course of sin, rebelling against the dictates and convictions of their own enlightened consciences. Dread it then as thou darest hell itself ; to sin against knowledge, to rebel against the light of thy own mind, to slight the whispers, to stifle the voice of thy own conscience ; but reverence and obey its dictates as the commands of God.

19 Because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them ; for God hath showed it unto them.

That is, much of the nature and properties of God may be known by the light of nature ; his infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, are manifest in the minds and consciences of all men ; *For God hath showed it unto them*, partly by imprinting these notions of himself upon the hearts of all men, and partly by the book of the creatures, in which his glorious attributes are written in large and legible characters. Learn hence, That all men have a natural knowledge of God, and those great duties which result from the knowledge of him. 2. That the natural knowledge which men have of God, if they live contrary to it, it is a sufficient evidence of their holding the truth of God in unrighteousness, and is a God-provoking and wrath-procuring sin.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead : so that they are without excuse.

The apostle here proceeds in acquainting us with that knowledge of God which

the heathens had by the light of nature, which was in their hearts, and augmented and increased by what of God they saw in the book of the creatures, namely, in the works of creation and providence: *The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, &c.* The sense I conceive is this: the wise and wonderful frame of the world, which cannot reasonably be ascribed to any other cause but God, is a sensible demonstration to all mankind of an eternal and powerful being, that was the author and contriver of it. The strokes of the Creator's hand are engraven in all parts of the universe; the heavens, the earth, and the capacious sea, with all things contained in them, are evident testimonies of the excellency of their original cause: and therefore such of the heathens of old as shut their eyes, and such of the Atheists at this day as wink hard, and will not see the footsteps of a Deity in the works of creation and providence, are, and will be, everlastingly left *without excuse*. Learn hence, 1. That much of the being and essential perfections of God may be known by the light of nature, if attended to; and much more may be understood by the book of the creatures, if attentively looked into. *The invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation*; that is, the creation of the world is a plain demonstration to men of the being and power of God. Learn, 2. That all such persons will be left for ever without excuse before God, who either extinguish the light of nature, and smother the natural notices which they have of God, or do not improve them by a due consideration of the works of God. Without opening the eye of reason, the book of the creation is of no more use to us than to the brute beasts. They see the creatures as well as we; but many of us consider the creatures, and see God in the creation, no more than they; and this will leave us *without excuse*. Learn, 3. How endearing are our obligations to Almighty God, for the favour and benefit of divine revelation, that together with the light of nature, we have the superadded light of scripture; the law to convince us of our sin, the gospel to discover a Saviour. The heathen had only those natural apostles of sun, moon, and stars, to guide them to God, and instruct them in their duty to him; but we have the wisdom of the Father, the incarnate Son of God, and his inspired apostles and ministers, to lead us into all truth, and his Holy Spirit to excite and quicken us in our obedience to him. Therefore eternally magnified be omnipotent love, for the light of scripture, for the benefit of divine revela-

tion. For though there be a natural theology, there is not a natural Christology; there is a natural divinity, but not a natural gospel; a knowledge of God by the light of nature, but no knowledge of Jesus the Mediator, without the light of scripture. All thanks, eternal thanks, be to God for his unspeakable gift! Lord, how will all such as condemn it be left without excuse!

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened:

From this verse to the end of the chapter we have a large and black catalogue of the sins which the old heathens or gentiles were guilty of; some of which they voluntarily committed, and others they were judicially delivered up unto, (for God without any impeachment of his holiness often punishes sin with sin.) Their sins voluntarily committed are here recited, and the first of them is their sinning against light and knowledge. They had some natural notices of God implanted and imprinted in their minds, and such an additional knowledge of his being and attributes, as might be gained by an attentive study in the *book of the creatures*; but they rebelled against this light, and thereby contracted an aggravated guilt. Learn thence, That to sin against light and knowledge, either in the omission of duty, or commission of sin, is the highest aggravation of sinfulness; as ignorance lesseneth, so knowledge aggravateth the malignity of sin. The next sin charged upon them was, they did not glorify that God whom they had the knowledge of: that is, they did not conceive of him and worship him as became his divine perfections and excellences; they did not esteem so highly of him as they ought, and pay that homage and honour to the Deity which they should. Learn thence, That the knowledge which we have of God and his attributes, if it do not engage us to honour, glorify, and worship him, suitably to his adorable perfections, it is vain and useless in God's account, and will but expose us to a more dreadful condemnation. Another sin mentioned in this verse, which the heathens were guilty of, was the sin of *unthankfulness*. They glorified *him* not as God, neither were they thankful. That is, they had not a due sense of the favours and benefits of God conferred upon them; but ascribing the blessings of heaven to chance and fortune, to fate and destiny, to the influ-

ence of the stars and planets, to their own prudence and providence, they paid their thanks to blind fortune for a favour which the eye of Providence had bestowed upon them. It is impossible that God should receive the tribute of thankfulness, if we do not see all our mercies flowing from him. Observe farther, The sad effect, fruit, and consequence, of the forementioned sins. The heathens which committed them, it is said, 1. *That they became vain in their imaginations*; that is, they had various opinions and vain conceptions of the Godhead. Some of them denied that there was a God, others doubted whether there was a God or no; some affirmed there was but one God, others owned a plurality, yea, a multiplicity of gods. Some acknowledged God's being, but denied his providence: others owned his providence, but confined it in its exercises to secondary causes. Thus vain in their imaginations, thus absurd in their notions, and thus sottish in their reasonings, were the heathens concerning God, his nature, and worship. Well might our apostle say, *They became vain in their imaginations*. And, 2. *That their foolish hearts were darkened*; that is, for rebelling against the light received, their minds and understandings were more and more darkened; their natural reason obscured, because not improved. Lord, how dangerous is it not to improve our knowledge: how fatal to rebel against the light and convictions of our own minds! it provokes thee to deliver us up to the power of spiritual darkness on earth, and consign us over to an eternal darkness in hell, where is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, as the punishment and portion of those that rebel against the light, and sin against knowledge.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

The next sin which the apostle charges upon the Gentiles, is the sin of idolatry. Such as *professed themselves to be the most wise* and knowing men among them, as their celebrated philosophers, poets, and orators, they debased and dishonoured the all-glorious God, by framing vile images of men and beasts, of birds and creeping things, to represent him by. These idolaters changed the glory of the living, ever-living God, into the likeness of lifeless things; whereas the Lord is so infinitely glorious, that nothing can set forth his

glory sufficiently; the most excellent creature cannot represent his super-excellent perfections, and accordingly it is as real a debasing of the divine Majesty to represent him by an angel, as by a worm or a fly. All attempted representations of God by any creature whatsoever, are idolatrous provocations.

24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

Observe here, 1. Another infamous sin charged upon the heathens; namely, the sin of uncleanness, yea, base, unnatural uncleanness, and pollutions of the most odious kinds. Learn thence, That idolatry and uncleanness often go together. Solomon's uncleanness led him to idolatry, and his idolatry increased his uncleanness. The city of Rome at this day, which is a grove of idols, the chief seat of idolatry, is next to a Sodom for uncleanness; witness their allowing of stews by public authority. Learn, 2. That all kinds and degrees of pollutions, both natural and unnatural, are to be detested, and abhorred, as *dishonouring the body*. Our bodies are Christ's members, the Holy Ghost's temples; let us therefore glorify God with our bodies on earth, which shall be subjects capable of glory with himself in heaven. Observe, 2. God's judiciary tradition of these idolatrous heathens to the sin of uncleanness: *Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness*. Almighty God often doth, and always righteously may, punish sin with sin. God punished the idolatry of the heathens here, by *delivering them up to vile affections*, to uncleanness and unnatural lusts. But how is this consistent with God's holiness and hatred of sin? Thus: God neither infuses sin into their hearts, nor excites to sin in their lives, but leaves sinners to themselves, to act without restraint according to the inclination of their own lusts and corruptions: and also gives them up to Satan, that unclean spirit, who will not fail to provoke them to such uncleanness as he knows their inclinations stand ready to comply with. Lord! keep back thy servants from sinning against the light of nature, against the light of scripture, lest we be judicially darkened, and given up to a *sottish and injudicious mind*, to hardness of heart, and the vilest affections.

25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator,

who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections : for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature : 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another ; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient ;

Here our apostle proceeds to give a particular and distinct account of the abominable idolatry and unnatural filthiness, which he had charged the heathens with in the foregoing verses. As to their idolatry, he had told us at the 23d verse, that they had made false and unworthy representations of the ever-blessed God ; worshipping God in and by the creatures. In this 25th verse, they are charged with a false object of their worship, giving divine honour to a creature : *They changed the truth of God into a lie ;* that is, the true God into an idol : called a *lie*, because it deceives men as a lie doth, by seeming to be that which indeed it is not : it seems, in the idolater's fancy, to have something of divinity in it ; when in reality it is but wood or stone. Every image of God is a false and lying representation of God. Secondly, As to their uncleanness, he shows that they were so given up to the ravings of lusts, for sinning against the light of nature, that they forsook the order of nature, and were more brutish than the very brutes. Learn hence, That when men provoke God finally to forsake them, and judiciously to give them up to their own hearts' lusts, they will not stick to commit such monstrous and unnatural uncleanness as the very brute beasts abhor. Here men and women burnt in worse than beastly lusts towards those of their own sex. Lord ! if we are not more vile than the vilest of thy creatures, we owe it all to thy sanctifying, or at least to thy restraining grace. As by the grace of God we are what we are ; so by his grace it is that we are not what we are not.

29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness ; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malig-

nity ; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful :

Here the apostle sums up the sins which the heathens committed against the second table, or against their neighbour ; not that every particular person was guilty of all these black crimes, but all were guilty of some, and some perhaps were guilty of all or most of them. Learn hence, That the heart of man doth naturally swarm and abound with strange and monstrous lusts and abominations.—Lord ! what a swarm is here ! and yet there are multitudes more in the depths of the heart. Whatever abominations were found in the hearts and lives of heathens and Sodomites, and the most profligate wretches under heaven, are radically and seminally in our corrupt and degenerate natures, Matt. xv. 19. *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, &c.* What are lusts, but so many toads spitting of venom and spawning of poison ! O deplorable degradation ! Learn, 2. How much sadder is the condition which unregenerate souls abide in, who remain in and under the power and dominion, the vassalage and slavery, of these imperious lusts, which perpetually rage within them, and incessantly contest and scuffle for the throne. Learn, 3. To stand astonished at the heart-changing grace of God, which has delivered thee from so dismal a condition. O ! fall down and kiss the feet of mercy ; adore the sovereignty and freeness of divine grace, which stepped in so seasonably to thy rescue. Lord ! what black imaginations, what vile affections, what hellish desires, what monstrous abominations, were lodged in my heart and nature, before regeneration wrought a change ! O that ever the Holy Ghost should set his eyes upon any of the sinful offspring of apostate Adam ; in whom were legions of unclean lusts, and whose nature was become the sink and seed-plot of all sin ! Observe lastly, Two particular sins, which of all others seem most monstrous in these heathens. 1. They were *haters of God*, not of his essence, being, and goodness, but haters of his holiness, justice, and providence. 2. They were *without natural affection*. This appeared by sacrificing their children to their idols ; and exposing themselves and their dearest relations to ruin. No sooner did we fall out with God, but we fell out with ourselves and one another.

32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

The apostle here closes the chapter with the blackest character that could be given of the gentiles' sin, namely, that although by the light of nature, and the dictates of natural conscience, they knew that their adulteries and unnatural lusts did deserve death, and expose them to the wrath of God, yet they not only committed those sins themselves, but took a real pleasure and delight in those that committed them. Now this was the top and height of their wickedness. It is a greater wickedness to approve and applaud sin, than it is to act and commit sin; to delight in sin, is worse than to do sin. A man may fall into sin by the policy of the tempter, and the prevalence of temptation, but by consideration may be brought to a sense of his folly, and repent of it; but when he is arrived to such a pitch of wickedness, that he not only approves and applauds, but takes pleasure and delight in the wickedness of others, this demonstrates such a strong affection to sin, as brings a man nearest to the devil in sinning. Learn hence, 1. That there is in God an avenging justice, engaging him to punish sin with the eternal death of the sinner. 2. That there is that evil malignity in sin, which deserves the judgment and sentence of eternal death. 3. That this desert of sin, as also the vengeance of God upon the sinner, is sufficiently made known to all men; to some by the light of nature, to others by the superadded light of scripture. 4. That notwithstanding this discovery of sin's desert of divine wrath, yet multitudes of sinners every where do not only commit wickedness themselves, but delight in it, and in them that do it, which lays them under an aggravated guilt, and will both heighten and hasten their condemnation: *Who knowing the judgment of God, that they who do such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but take pleasure in them that do them.*

CHAP. II.

The apostle having in the first chapter discovered at large the rueful state of the gentiles by nature, and their worse condition by reason of sin, in rebelling against the light and law of nature: in this second chapter he comes to speak of the Jews, and lays them as low as he did the gentiles, upon design to convince both of their utter impossibility of being justified before God by any righteousness of their own, but only by faith in Jesus Christ.

THEREFORE thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art

that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest, doest the same things.

Lest the Jews should swell and be puffed up with pride, by hearing what the apostle said in the former chapter, of the detestable wickedness of the gentiles, and the heavy displeasure of God against them for the same, St. Paul in this chapter pronounces the Jews to be guilty of the same sins, of which he had accused the gentiles, affirming that the Jews had offended as much against the law of Moses, as the gentiles had offended against the law of nature; and consequently their censuring and judging others, when they did the same thing themselves, would render them totally inexcusable at God's tribunal: *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, that judgest another, and by doing the same things condemnest thyself.* Learn hence, 1. That it is too usual and common a practice to condemn that sin in another which men practise themselves. 2. That when persons commit themselves the sins which they censure and condemn in others, they are totally inexcusable, and pronounce sentence against themselves.

2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them which commit such things. **3** And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

As if the apostle had said, We that are Jews know, by the light of the scripture, what the gentiles knew imperfectly by the light of nature, that the just God judges uprightly, according to truth, and not according to appearance. It is equitable that he should, and certain that he will, deal with men according to his word, and reward every man according to his work. Think not then, O Jew! who judgest the gentiles for doing such things against the law of Moses, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God, which they have so severely felt. Learn hence, That such is God's hatred against sin, and such is the impartiality of his justice towards sinners, that no offenders can expect escaping the judgment of God for presumptuous sinning, *Thinkest thou, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?* No, affection, or nearness of relation, can blind God, or put out the eye of his justice. If the gentile or Jew sin together, they shall suffer together;

for there is no respect of persons with God: God will judge men in truth and righteousness, and condemn every sinner, whatever his knowledge or profession be. Learn, 2. That no man's zeal in condemning sin in others will justify or save him, if he lives in sin himself: *Think not, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God.*

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5 But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Observe here, 1. The indulgent carriage of Almighty God towards poor sinners, discovered in the vast expense of the riches of his goodness and bounty upon them, and in the patient exercise of his forbearance and long-suffering towards them. Observe, 2. The gracious end and design of God in this expense of his goodness, and in the exercise of his patience and forbearance; namely, *To lead sinners to repentance.* The end of goodness is to oblige and engage persons to love and serve their benefactor; this is the most natural and unconstrained consequence that the mind of man can infer from God's bounty and sparing mercy: *The goodness of God leadeth to repentance.* Observe, 3. The unanswerable and undue returns which sinners make to God for the exercise of so much goodness and forbearance towards them: *they despise the riches of his goodness and long-suffering.* They despise it by being unthankful for it, and not improving of it; and by misimproving or sinning against it, they melt the mercies of God into bullets, and shoot them at the breast of the Almighty. Observe, 4. The sad and fatal consequence of these undue returns made to God by sinners: hereby *they treasure up wrath against the day of wrath.* As if the apostle had said, "The more patience God expends upon thee, if perverted and abused by thee, the greater wrath is treasured up for thee; which, the longer it has been treasured up, will break forth the more fiercely and violently to consume thee." Observe, 5. The description given by the apostle of the day of judgment; he calls it, *a revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* The judgment of God is righteous now, but it is not always revealed and openly made manifest now; therefore a time shall come, when

there shall be a revelation of his righteous judgment fully. From the whole, note, 1. That the goodness of God is a natural and genuine motive to repentance. 2. That not to be persuaded by, is in God's account to despise his goodness. Note, 3. That this despising of goodness by delaying our repentance, is the treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath. As sinners have treasures of sin, so God has treasures of wrath for sinners. Note, lastly, That the day of judgment will be a day of revelation, a day in which the righteousness of God's proceedings shall be universally manifested and magnified: then will all the divine attributes be conspicuously glorified; his wonderful clemency sweetly displayed; his exact justice terribly demonstrated; his perfect wisdom clearly unfolded; all the knotty intricacies of providence wisely resolved; all the mysterious depths of divine counsels fully discovered; and the injured honour and glory of Almighty God visibly cleared and repaired, to the joyful satisfaction of all good men, and to the dreadful consternation and confusion of the wicked and impenitent world: O how well might the apostle call this day, *The revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*

6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds: 7 To them, who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life. 8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, 9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; 10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; 11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

The apostle in the foregoing verse had given a description of the general day of judgment, which he called *a revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* Here he acquaints us with the impartiality and uprightness of God in the distribution of rewards and punishments in that day; according to the merits and deserts of men; *Who will render to every man according to his deeds;* that is, according to the kind and quality, and according to the measures and degrees, of every man's works. Where note, He doth not say, God will render to

every man a reward for his works, but according to his works: works are *regula retributionis, non causa mercedis*; "Our works are the rule of God's proceedings, but not the cause of his rewards." Having thus described the impartiality of the judge, he next declares the universality of the persons that shall then be judged; namely, the righteous and the wicked, which shall both have their distinct rewards assigned them, according to the quality of their works. Observe, 1. The righteous persons described, and their reward declared: they are described by their *well doing*, by their *continuance* in well-doing, by their *patient continuance* in well-doing; they are not weary in well-doing, they can undergo sufferings for the sake of well-doing, and they can patiently wait for the reward of well-doing till hereafter, whilst others snatch at their reward here. Yet in the mean time they are seeking after and securing of this their reward: *They seek for glory, honour, and immortality*; that is, they seek for a portion of glory and immortality in the world to come: they leave the world to the men of the world, and whilst they are scrambling for earth, they are making sure of heaven. Next, their persons being described, their reward is declared; *Eternal life*: an eternity of glory and happiness in a future state shall certainly be the reward of well-doers, and of patient continuance in well-doing. Observe, 2. The wicked are here characterized, and their reward assigned: *They are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness*: that is, they contend with God, and resist the light of his revealed truth; they refuse the offers of his grace, and kick against his word, disobeying the gospel of truth, but obeying unrighteousness. God will pour forth upon such, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. Lord, who knoweth the power of thine anger, or who can bear the weight of thy wrath! It broke the back of angels; how shall sinners stand under it! 'Tis styled fire in scripture, 'tis a consuming fire, and an unquenchable fire: it preys upon the sinner, but never devours him: it is unquenchable by any thing but the blood of Christ. A mysterious fire, whose strange property it is always to torment, but never to kill; or always to kill, but never to consume. Observe, 3. With what equity, as well as impartiality, this distribution of God's indignation and wrath will be made: *Upon every soul that doeth evil; but upon the Jew first, and then of the Gentile*. The Jew first, that is, principally and especially; because the light and mercy which the Jews abused and sinned against, was far greater than that bestowed upon

the Gentiles. Learn hence, That the light under which men sin, puts extraordinary aggravations upon their sins, answerable whereunto will be the degrees of their punishment. The Gentiles will be condemned for disobeying the light of nature, the law of God written on their hearts; but much greater wrath is reserved for the Jews, unto whom were committed the oracles of God; but the greatest of all is reserved for Christians, who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, 3 *Thess.* i. 9, 10.

12 For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law;

That is, as many as have sinned without the *written* law, which is the case of the Gentiles or heathens, shall also perish without *that* law, being judged and condemned by the law of *nature* written in their hearts; but as many as have sinned in, or under the law of Moses, which is the case of the Jews, shall be judged and condemned by *that* law. Observe here, 1. A truth plainly implied and necessarily supposed; namely, that as some sinners perish, having the written word and all external means of salvation, so others perish, having not the written word or law of God, and the outward and ordinary means of salvation: *As many as have sinned without the law, shall perish without the law*. God in the dispensations of his grace acteth in a way of sovereignty, according to his own pleasure: yet in his penal dispensations he proceeds according to the measures of strict justice, upon the previous demerits of sinners. Observe, 2. That all men shall not be proceeded against in the day of judgment after one and the same manner; but every man according to the demerit of his sin, and according to the capacity and relation in which he stood in this life. The Gentiles, which had only the law of *nature*, shall not be judged by the law of Moses; the Jews, which have both the law of *nature*, and the law of Moses, shall be judged by both: and consequently Christians, which have the law of *nature* unwritten, the *Mosaic* law written, and the *evangelical* law both written and preached, shall lie under greater guilt, and receive a more aggravated condemna-

tion. Christ will exactly proportion every man's *hell* hereafter to his *sin* committed here; the greater light we have quenched, the greater darkness will be inflicted, Heb. ii. 3. *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?*

13 For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

That is, not the *bare hearers* of the law shall upon that account be just before God, but the *doers* of the law shall be justified; that is, accepted of God as acting suitably to their holy profession. It is notoriously known, the *Jews* gloried in, and rested upon, their outward privileges for salvation: because they were Abraham's seed, because they were circumcised, because they were employed in reading and hearing of the law, they concluded this sufficient to render them acceptable with God; therefore, says the apostle, not the *hearers*, but *doers* of the law, shall be justified; that is, the persons whom God will accept and account righteous for the sake of Christ. Note here, That the doers of the law or word of God are the best hearers, yea, the only hearers in the account of God. Hearing is good, but it must not be rested in: a great understanding may a man have by much reading the word and law of God; but a *good understanding* only have they that *do the word and will of God; the praise and fruit of that endureth forever*, Psal. cxi. 10.

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another:

The sense is, that the Gentiles, which have not the law of Moses promulged, are yet not without a law ingrafted in their consciences; and although they have not a written law, yet are they a *law*: that is, a rule of living, to themselves; doing those things which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences bearing witness to it, and their natural reason either accusing or defending of them from it. Learn, 1. That there is a law of nature ingrafted, and written by God in the hearts of men, whereby the common notions of good and evil are found with them. Learn, 2. That this law

of nature serveth for the instigation and provocation of men to many good actions and duties towards God and man. 3. That to rebel against, and not walk in conformity unto this ingrafted law of nature, is a God-provoking, and a wrath-procuring sin. 4. That although many of the Gentiles gave themselves over to all manner of uncleanness, yet others *showed the works of the law written in their hearts*. They showed it in two ways: 1. By their temperance, righteousness, and moral honesty; wherein, (to our shame) they excelled many of us who are called Christians. 2. In the efficacy of their conscience; which as it cleared and comforted them for things well done, so it witnessed against them, yea, judged and condemned them, for doing evil. And these evidences of a law written on the heart, are every where to be found, wherever men are found: *The Gentiles having not a written law, are a law unto themselves, and show the work of the law written in their hearts*.

16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

As if the apostle had said, If any shall ask, When shall rewards and punishments be distributed to Jew or Gentile? The answer is, *In that day when God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel*; that is, as my gospel testifies he will most certainly do. Here observe, 1. A fundamental doctrine asserted, That there will be a day of judgment, in which the secrets of all men's hearts shall be judged by Jesus Christ as Mediator. All the thoughts, words, and works of all men, that lived from the beginning of the world, or shall live to the end of the world, will then be produced in judgment; and if so, may we not infer, that the day of judgment must certainly and necessarily take up a vast space of time! For if all records and registers now made shall then be opened and read, and all the witnesses for and against a man shall be then examined and heard, what a vast space of time then must that great day take up! Some divines are of opinion that the day of judgment may last as long as the world lasted. This we may depend upon, that things will not be huddled up, nor shuffled over in haste; but as sinners have taken their time for sinning, so God will take his time for judging. Observe, 2. The proof and confirmation of this doctrine of a future judgment: *According to my gospel*; that is, as certainly as I have foretold you of it in the doctrine which I have preached, so

certainly shall all men, and the secrets of all mens' hearts, be judged by Jesus Christ. But was it not a presumption in St. Paul, to call the gospel *his gospel*? Answer, He means that he was the publisher, not the author of it; it was God's in respect of authority, St. Paul's in respect of ministry. It was God's in respect of revelation; *his* only in respect of dispensation.

17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God. 18 And knowest *his* will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; 19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, 20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law :

Here the apostle proceeds in his former argument; namely, to prove that the *Jews* could no more rationally expect to be justified before God by the law of Moses, than the Gentiles by the law of nature: the apostle allows them all their privileges which they so much doted upon, boasted of, and gloried in; but withal, assures them, that these, all these, yea, more than these, were insufficient to justify them before God. As if the apostle had said, "Thou bearest thyself mightily upon this, that *thou art called a Jew*, that is, a professor of the true religion, and a worshipper of the true God; *thou retest in the law*, that is, either in the divineness and perfection of it, or in thy external obedience to it, and in the outward performances of it: *thou makest thy boast of God*, as a God in covenant with thee above all the nations of the earth; and *thou knowest his will*, having his word and law in thy hands, the oracles of God committed to thee, and the writings of Moses and the prophets alone found with thee; and *approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law*; that is, thou thinkest that thou hast such a degree of knowledge of God's word and will, that thou canst clearly discern between sin and duty, and compare one duty with another, preferring that which is most excellent: *And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light to them that are in darkness*; that is, thou hast a strong conceit that such are the measures of thy knowledge, that thou art able to be a guide to the blind *Gentiles*, who sit in darkness, and to be a *teacher of babes*: that is, such as have little or no knowledge in the mat-

ters of religion, conceiting, *That thou hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law*: that is, such a method and measure of divine knowledge as may enable thee to instruct others, whether Gentiles or *Jews*, which never reached to thy attainments." These external privileges the presumptuous *Jew* rested upon, and thought them sufficient to salvation, though he lived loosely, and his practice gave his profession the lie. Hence learn, 1. That persons are exceedingly prone to be proud of and puffed up with church privileges, glorying in the letter of the law, whilst neither in heart nor life they are conformed to the spirituality of the law. Learn, 2. That gifts, duties, and supposed graces, are the stay and staff which hypocrites rest upon, and repose their trust and confidence in: *Thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law*; that is, in the outward profession of the law, or in an external obedience to the law; the apostle speaks of this their *resting in the law*, not barely by way of narration, but by way of reproof, telling us not only what they did, but how ill they did in so doing. The duties which Christ has appointed, are the rest and trust of the hypocrites; but Christ himself is the trust and rest of the upright; they desire to be ever acting graces, never trusting to them; to be much in duty, and yet much above duty; much in it in point of performance; much above it in regard of dependence.

21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preacheest, A man should not steal, dost thou steal? 22 Thou that sayest, A man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? 23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? 24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

The apostle proceeds to the end of this chapter to convince the *Jews*, that they were equally in a sinful and wretched condition with the despised Gentiles, and therefore stood in need of Jesus Christ to justify them by his grace as well as they. And because the *Jews* were so exceedingly apt to dote upon, and rest in, their external privileges, he did in the foregoing verses recount and reckon up the several privileges which they enjoyed; *Thou art called Jew, thou makest thy boast of God, &c.* But

now, in the verses before us, he takes occasion to aggravate their sins committed, from their high privileges and prerogatives enjoyed, because they sinned against light and knowledge, against the convictions of their own consciences, and contradicted the dictates of their minds, as the Gentiles did; but besides all that, rebelled against the precepts of the written word, which was all in their hands. The law of Moses was near in their mouths, but far from their reins; for thus the apostle expostulates the case with them: *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?* Thou that undertakest to be a teacher of, and a guide unto, the ignorant and blind Gentiles, wilt thou not practise thine own instructions; but condemn thyself out of thine own mouth? "Wilt thou, O Jew! (as if the apostle had said) be guilty of theft, adultery, sacrilege, rapine, and murder, sins which the very heathens condemn, and all this while call yourselves the only people of God? Verily, the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you Jews, who pretend to be the favourites of heaven, whilst you do the works of hell." Learn hence, 1. That it is much easier to instruct and teach others, than to be instructed and receive instruction ourselves. Learn, 2. That it is both sinful and shameful to teach others the right way, and to go in the wrong ourselves. It is a double fault in a private person, when his actions run cross to his profession; but it is an inexcusable, if not an unpardonable fault, in a teacher, when the crimes which he condemns in others may be justly charged upon himself: *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?* Learn, 3. That the name of God suffers much, very much, yea, by none so much as those who preach and press the duties of Christianity upon others, but practise them not themselves. *The name of the Lord is blasphemed* by such preachers, the wicked profane world taking occasion from thence to wound the name of God with the poisoned arrows and darts of reproach. The sins of teachers are teaching sins. True, sin strictly speaking cannot injure the name and glory of God. He is above the reach of any mischief that sin can do him: his essential glory is perfect, and can neither be increased nor diminished by the creatures: God can no more be hurt by our sins, than the sun can be hurt by throwing stones into the air, or the moon hurt by the barking of dogs. But his manifestative glory, or the present manifestations of his glory, these are clouded and eclipsed by sin; and therefore God will deal with knowing sinners, especially with such as undertake to be teachers of

others, as with those that have blasphemed his name, wounded his glory, trampled upon his honour, and caused his holy ways to be evil spoken of, by reason of their wicked and unholy lives. Lord, let all that administer unto thee in holy things consider, that they have not only their own sins to account for, but also the sins of their people, if committed by their profligate example.

25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. 26 Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? 27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

It is sufficiently known what great stress the Jews laid upon circumcision; they taught, that this alone was enough to procure the favour of God, and to free them from hell; "God having," as they said, "promised Abraham, that if his children transgressed, he would remember the odour of the foreskins, and deliver them for the merit of circumcision;" but all this was a false and vain-glorious bustle. Our apostle, therefore, in the words before us, assures the Jews, that circumcision without holiness of conversation would never free them from condemnation; that a circumcised Jew, who walks not in obedience to the law of God, is in as bad or worse condition than any uncircumcised heathen; yea, the *uncircumcision*, that is, the uncircumcised person, that keeps the law, shall be accepted of God, as well as if he had been circumcised; and be preferred by God before the circumcised Jew that transgresses the law. The sum is, That the obedient Gentile shall condemn the disobedient Jew, and be sooner accepted by God, with whom there is no respect of persons, but with respect to their qualifications. That no church privileges, no external prerogatives, nor the highest profession of piety and holiness, without an humble, uniform, and sincere obedience, will be any thing available to salvation. And as then an uncircumcised Gentile found better acceptance with God than any circumcised Jews; even so an unbaptized heathen at the great day will not change place with many baptized Christians. It is a sad, but a certain truth, that the case

of the Pagan world will be much easier in the day of judgment, than others that live and die disobedient under the gospel of Jesus Christ. The heathens have abused but one talent, *the light of nature*; but we thousands, even as many thousands as we have slighted the tenders of offered grace. Lord! what a fearful aggravation doth it put upon our sin and misery, when we fall from the height of mercy into the depth of misery! We must certainly be accountable to thee at the great day, not only for all the light we had, but for all that we might have, had in the gospel-day; and especially for that light we have sinned under and rebelled against.

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is *that* circumcision which is outward in the flesh: 29 But he is a Jew: which is one inwardly; and circumcision is *that* of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Here our apostle comes close and home to the self-confident *Jews*, and touches them in the most sensible part. It was the hardest saying that could sound in a *Jewish* ear, to affirm, that *circumcision which is outward in the flesh* profiteth nothing; for they so gloried in it, that they accounted it equal to the keeping of all the commandments of God. Now our apostle here takes away the very foundation of this their boasting and glorying, by a plain and true distinction. There is, saith he, a *Jew outwardly*, that only has a badge of circumcision in his flesh. Now he is not a Jew in God's account, who is only so by outward circumcision; neither is that circumcision valuable or available which is only outward in the flesh: but then there is a *Jew who is one inwardly*; namely, by the purification of his heart from all filthy lusts, evil affections, and sinful dispositions; and a *circumcision of the heart, and in the spirit*; that is, a circumcision wrought in us by the Spirit of God, and not barely by the letter of the law: and the *praise of this is not of men*, who cannot discern the heart, but of God, who is the searcher of the heart, and trier of the reins. Learn hence, That although men are very prone to rest upon church privileges and external performances, as evidences of Divine favour, yet they are no testimonies nor signs of the truth of grace. What circumcision, sacrifices, and the temple, were to the Jews of old, the same are baptism, the Lord's supper, and public assemblies, to professing Christians at this day. And as

the Jews rested in those externals without eyeing Christ in them, without desiring to derive holiness and sanctification from them; in like manner, multitudes of professors set up their rest in outward duties, and repose a fleshly, carnal confidence in ordinances, without either desiring of, or endeavouring after, any lively communion with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the exercise of faith and love, without any regard to spiritual warmth in religious duties, and being by ordinances rendered more like to the God of the ordinances, which are the most desirable things next to heaven itself. So that I shall conclude the chapter with the same application to Christians now, as the apostle did to the Jews then: "Circumcision," saith the apostle, "verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision: for he is not a Jew," &c. In like manner say I. "Baptism verily profiteth, if we perform the conditions of that covenant which we entered into by baptism: but if we do not, our baptism is no baptism; for he is not a Christian, who is one outwardly; nor is that baptism which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Christian which is one inwardly; and baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the water only; and such shall have praise, if not of men, yet of God."

CHAP. III.

Our apostle in this chapter proceeds in his grand design and purpose in writing this epistle: namely, To prove all persons, both Jews and Gentiles, to be under sin, and consequently under an impossibility of being justified by works, but only by faith in Christ Jesus. In the former part of the chapter, he answers the objections of the Jews against what he had asserted in the foregoing chapter, and the first objection runs thus:

WHAT advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2 Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

The sense is this: But you of the *Jews* will object, and say, "If outward circumcision avails nothing, but the inward circumcision is all in all; and if the uncircumcised person, keeping the law, is to be reckoned as circumcised, *what advantage then hath the Jew* above the Gentile? or what profit is there of the *circumcision* above *uncircumcision*?" He answers it, ver. 2. saying, The advantage is *much every way*; but chiefly, because unto them were committed the oracles of God: that is, the holy scriptures contained in the Old Testament, the sacraments and seals of the covenant, the

prophecies and promises of the Messiah, and the whole revelation of the word and will of God, were then found with them, and in their hands only. Hence learn, 1. Great is that people's privilege and mercy who enjoy the word of God, the audible word in the holy scriptures, the visible word in the holy sacraments. This enlighteneth the eyes, rejoiceth the heart, quickeneth the soul. This is compared to gold for profit, to honey for sweetness, to milk for nourishing, to food for strengthening. O how many souls are blessing God eternally for the benefit and blessing of divine revelation! The Jews had this special favour: *to them were committed the oracles of God*; that is, the writings of Moses and the prophets. But we Christians have a privilege beyond them, the doctrine of Jesus delivered to us by evangelists and apostles; not like the killing letter of the law, but a gospel bringing life and immortality to light. Observe, 2. The title which St. Paul gives to the holy scriptures: he calls them the *oracles of God*. St. Stephen calls them the *holy oracles*, Acts, vii. 38. partly because delivered by a lively voice from God, partly because they should be to us as *oracles*; that is, consulted with upon all occasions, for resolving all doubts, determining all controversies. Had the church of Rome consulted these oracles more, and councils, &c. less, she had kept the doctrine of faith much freer from corruption than she has done. Observe, lastly, That the original word, here rendered *oracles*, is the same which profane wretches made use of for the dark and doubtful oracles of the devil: nevertheless, the Holy Ghost doth not disdain, nor decline, to make use of this word, as he doth also several others, though abused to heathenish superstition: which may serve to rectify their mistake, who scruple to make use of words, much more of some things, which have been abused to superstition. Verily there may be superstition in avoiding superstition; and though we cannot be too circumspect in our words and actions, yet we may be too nice and precise in both. Yet note, That though the same word, *λογια*, signifies God's oracles and Satan's, yet these oracles were not delivered in the same manner. Satan delivered his oracles ambiguously and doubtfully, keeping his dark and blind votaries as much as might be in the dark; what he said might bear several constructions, that so whatever the event or issue proved to be, he, the father of lies, might have the reputation of speaking truth: but God's oracles are plain and clear, free from ambiguity and darkness; the scriptures are

not dark, though some places are difficult, and that proceeds from the sublimity of the matter, not from the intention of the writer

3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? 4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

Here follows a second objection: some might say, "True, the Jews had the oracles of God, but some of them never believed them, nor gave any credit to the promise of the Messiah contained in them; therefore they had no advantage by them." Be it so, saith the apostle; yet shall the unbelief of some make the faith or fidelity of God in his promises of no effect to others? *God forbid* that such a thought should enter into our hearts; but on the contrary, let God be acknowledged true and faithful to his word, though all men should prove liars. Learn thence, 1. That man's infidelity cannot shake the stability of God's word, whether we believe the fidelity of the promises, or assent to the veracity of God in his threatenings, or not; his word standeth fast for ever. The promise shall be fulfilled, the threatening executed; only with this difference, we cannot personally find the comfort of the promise without faith, but we shall experimentally feel the terror of the threatening, whether we believe it or no. Learn, 2. The wonderful, condescending grace of God toward those who have any measure of true faith, though with great mixtures of unbelief. O how faithful is God to us (if in truth believers) in the midst of our unfaithfulness to him! the unbelief of men shall not make the fidelity or faith of God of no effect. Learn, 3. That as God is a God of truth, so all men are false and liars, compared with God. As God cannot lie, neither deceive, nor be deceived, so every man is fallible and false; that is, under possibility of deceiving and being deceived: *Let God be true, but every man a liar*. Learn, 4. That a good man under afflictions is very careful to justify and clear God from dealing unjustly with him in any of his several dispensations towards him. The apostle here quotes Psalm li. 4. *That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and clear when thou art judged*. As if David had said, "I know the men of the world, when they see me afflicted, will be ready to judge hardly of God for it; therefore, to stop their mouths, to clear the justice of God,

that he may overcome, when he is judged for dealing rigorously with me; I do freely confess my sin unto him, with all the aggravating circumstances of it; that all the world may justify him, how great soever my sufferings may be from him." A child of God, under the rod of God, desires nothing more than to justify him in all his severest dealings with, and dispensations towards, him.

5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is* God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? I speak as a man. 6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

A third objection here followeth, namely, "That if the unrighteousness of men, that is, both of *Jews* and Gentiles, tends so visibly to commend, that is, to illustrate and recommend, the righteousness of God, namely, his wisdom, grace, and favour, in appointing this way of justification by faith in Christ; how can it be right in God to punish them for this unrighteousness, which tends so highly to illustrate the glory of his gospel-grace?" The apostle tells us, that in making this objection, *he spake as a man*, that is, as natural and carnal men are ready to think and speak: But, says he, God forbid that we should entertain such a thought, as if God either were or could be unrighteous; *for then how shall God judge the world* for their unrighteousness? Learn hence, 1. That although the unrighteousness and wickedness of men be overruled by God to subserve the purposes of his glory; yet is God just in punishing all unrighteousness and wickedness whatsoever. God is never intentionally, but is sometimes accidentally, glorified by the sin of man. There never was such a hellish wickedness committed as crucifying Christ; nothing by which God ever reaped greater glory, than by the death of his Son; yet is the wrath of God come upon the Jews to the utmost, and that most justly, for their committing of that wickedness. Learn, 2. That the righteous God neither doth nor can do any iniquity or unrighteousness whatsoever? *Is God unrighteous? How then shall God judge the world?* God is the judge of all the world, and cannot but do right; because the universality of his power puts him above all possibility of error in the exercise of his power. The very reason why God cannot exercise his power beyond the limits of justice, is because his power is altogether unlimited; he can do whatsoever he will do; and whatsoever he will do, is for that reason

just: *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner? 8 And not *rather* as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, Let us do evil that good may come? whose damnation is just.

We must by no means understand these words as spoken by the apostle himself in his own name, as if he had told lies for upholding of the truth, and that the truth of God had abounded to the glory of God through his lies; but he speaks in the person of a profane objector. Thus some man (as if the apostle had said) may possibly plead for his sins: "The truth of God hath gained by my lie, the faithfulness of God is made more manifest by the unfaithfulness of men; therefore why should I be judged and condemned as a sinner, when the glory of God will shine more bright upon the occasion of my sin? The free grace of God discovered in the gospel will be manifested, say some, and magnified in the pardoning of our sin: let us therefore sin our fill, that the immeasurableness of divine goodness may appear, and the abundance of pardoning mercy may abound." The apostle rejects this doctrine and practice of doing evil that good may come, with the greatest abhorrence and utter detestation, affirming, That their damnation is just, who either fasten this doctrine upon the apostles, or affirm it themselves. Learn hence, That no person must adventure to do the least of evils; no, not for the sake of the greatest good. True, Almighty God can bring good out of evil, by the same word of his power by which he brought light out of darkness, and something out of nothing; but to do any thing really evil for obtaining the greatest good, is dangerous and damnable. Sin, or that which is sinful, ought not to be chosen, whatever we choose. Learn, 2. That nothing is more just and righteous than their damnation, who will adventure to do evil that good may come. A good intention will not excuse, never justify, a bad action in the sight of God; he will condemn evil-doers, though they do evil that good may come. Learn, 3. That the apostle pronounces their damnation just, who laid these slanders to the apostle's charge, as if their doctrine did allow of this damnable practice, to do evil that good might come: *Their damnation is just who thus slanderously report and affirm that we say,*

Let us do evil that good may come. Whence note, That it is a just thing with God to damn those men that raise or spread abroad reports of his ministers' doctrine, as giving liberty to licentious practices. Verily, the slander of a minister's regular doctrine is more than ordinary slander. The original word here rendered *slander*, signifies blasphemy; the word which God makes use of to set forth his own reproaches by. Behold God's resentment of his ministers' wrongs! the slander and contempt cast upon our office and doctrine is esteemed blasphemy in God's account: *As we be slanderously reported or blasphemed; and as some affirm that we say, Let us do evil, that good may come; whose damnation is just.*

9 What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

Here the apostle starts another objection in the name of the Jews: some of them might say, "Are we not better than the Gentiles? Do we not excel them in outward privileges? Is not the knowledge of the law found with us, and the oracles of God committed to us?" True, says the apostle, the Jews are better than the Gentiles in respect of outward dispensations, but not in respect of inward qualifications. Jews and Gentiles are alike by natural corruption; alike under sin by actual transgressions, and so stand in need both alike of justification by faith; and the gospel-righteousness is no less necessary for the one than for the other. To prove what he had said, namely, That the whole race of mankind, both Jew and Gentile, were under sin, and void of all true righteousness, and goodness, and consequently standing in need equally of justification by Christ! the apostle produces several texts out of the Old Testament, and particularly out of the fourteenth Psalm, which speaks fully of the original corruption and universal depravation of all mankind, in the following words:

10 As it is written, *There is none righteous, no, not one*: 11 *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.* 12 *They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.* 13 *Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips*: 14 *Whose mouth is full of curs-*

ing and bitterness: 15 *Their feet are swift to shed blood*: 16 *Destruction and misery are in their ways*: 17 *And the way of peace have they not known*: 18 *There is no fear of God before their eyes.*

Observe here, How the apostle proves his assertion, namely, that both Jew and Gentile were under the guilt both of original and actual transgression, from the testimony of David, *Psal. xiv.* where the state of corrupt nature is described, and the natural condition of all men declared, till they are either restrained or renewed by the grace of God: *There is none righteous, no, not one.* Which words are true in several respects. 1. There is none originally righteous, no, not one; none righteous in their first plantation in the world, until they are transplanted into the body of Christ, wrought and fashioned by his Holy Spirit. 2. There is none efficiently righteous, no, not one; none have a righteousness of their own making, but of God's. The righteousness of justification and sanctification both are from Christ, not from ourselves; we are his workmanship, not our own. 3. There is none meritoriously righteous, no, not one; none that can deserve or demand any thing as a due debt at God's hand: but the most righteous and holy saints are but unprofitable servants. 4. There is none perfectly and completely righteous, no, not one; but inchoatively only. None righteous in a strict and legal sense, but in a gospel and qualified sense only. *He that doeth righteousness, is righteous*, in the account of God; and as such, shall be accepted and rewarded by him. Observe, 2. How the apostle proves the corruption of mankind in general, by an induction of particulars. He surveys him in all the principal faculties of his soul, and members of his body; his understanding, will, and affections; his eye, hand, tongue, and feet, all corrupted and depraved: *their mouth is full of cursing, and bitter speeches; their throat is an open sepulchre*, gaping after and devouring the good name of their neighbours, and belching out filthy, ill scented, and unsavoury words, against them. *They seek not God in any thing they do, and there is no fear of God, no respect of God before their eyes.* The apostle shuts up all with this, because want of the fear of God before our eyes, is the fountain from which all other evils do proceed and flow. The fear of God is the bridle and curb which restrains from sin; where that is wanting, all iniquity abounds; where that is present and prevalent, it keeps the soul close to God, Jer

xxvii. 32. *I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.* We usually depart far, yea, run fast from, those we fear; but the true fear of God will make us cleave close unto him, because love is intermixed with it, and renders it a delightful fear.

19 Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Observe here, Lest the *Jews* should think to elude or evade the force of the foregoing testimonies concerning man's corruption and depravation as not belonging to them, but to the Gentiles only, he tells them, that *what the law*, that is, the books of the Old Testament, do thus say, it says to *those that are under the law*; that is, to those that are subjects of it and obliged by it; to such as are under the instruction and direction of it, as the *Jews* are known to be; and if so, then *every mouth must be stopped*, Jew and Gentile both must own themselves before God obnoxious to his wrath, without being able to say any thing for themselves. Learn hence, that the holy law of God brings such plain evidence and conviction with it, that no man can have a word to speak against it. When God spreads before men the purity of his laws, and the impiety of their own lives, every man must sit down silent, and lay his hand upon his mouth, not having one word to object why sentence should not be executed, because they have all transgressed.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: For by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Here we have St. Paul's conclusion drawn from all the foregoing premises: "Seeing all mankind since the fall are disabled by their innate corruption, and actual transgression, to fulfil the law, either natural or written: it must necessarily follow, that *by the works of the law can no flesh*, that is, no person, either Jew or Gentile, be justified before God; all the efficacy which the law now has, being to discover sin, and condemn for sinning; *by the law is the knowledge of sin*. By the law we apprehend our malady, but by the gospel we understand our remedy." Learn hence, That no son of Adam, since the breach of the law, can stand justified before God by his best obedience to the commands of the law: by being justified, understand that gracious act in God, whereby we are acquitted, and

finally discharged, from the guilt and punishment of all our sins. By the law here, and by the deeds of the law, we are to understand the ceremonial and moral law both, especially the latter; for by the moral law is the knowledge of sin; it is the moral law that forbids theft, adultery, &c. Besides, it is evident that the antithesis, or opposition, runs all along, not between ceremonial works and moral works, but between works in general and faith: the law of works and the law of faith, are opposed to each other, ver. 27. But why *can no flesh*, that is, no person, be justified by the deeds of the law? Answer, 1. Because he is flesh, that is, depraved by original corruption, and obnoxious to the curse of the law by actual transgression. Now that which condemns cannot justify. An after obedience to the law can never atone for a former disobedience. 2. Because the best obedience we can perform to the law, is imperfect. Now he that mixes but one sin with a thousand good works, can never be justified by his works. He that would be justified by his works, must not have one bad work amongst all his works; for that one will lay him under the curse and condemnatory sentence of the law; Gal. iii. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* Nothing that is imperfect can be a ground of justification before God, because the design of God is to exalt his justice as well as his mercy in the justification of a sinner. Again, 3. No flesh can be justified by the works of the law; because all that we do, or can do, is a due debt which we owe to the law: we owe all possible obedience to the law as creatures; and by performing our obligations as creatures, we can never pay our debts as transgressors. But now our surety Christ Jesus, who has given satisfaction for our violation of the law, was under no obligation to the law, but what he voluntarily laid himself under upon our account. And if so, let us eternally bless God with the highest elevation of soul for the gospel revelation, for sending his own Son to justify and save us, by working out a complete and everlasting righteousness for us: and let us plead with him incessantly for the grace of justifying faith, which is as necessary in its place as the death of Christ. One renders God reconcileable unto poor sinners, the other actually reconciled.

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness

of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference; 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Our apostle having proved negatively, that by the works of the law righteousness and justification are not to be had for any person, be he Jew or Gentile; he comes now to prove the affirmative part of his assertion; namely, that God hath manifested another way of justification in the gospel, to wit, by faith in Jesus Christ. "For, saith he, now, that is, since the coming of Christ, since the dispensation of the gospel; *the righteousness of God*; that is, the righteousness which God appoints, approves, and accepts for a sinner's justification, *is without the law*; that is, without performing the works of the law, either natural, ceremonial, or moral; and is manifested to be the righteousness which is by faith in Christ; which all that believe and obey the gospel, shall be admitted to the participation of, both Jew and Gentile; *for there is no difference*; that is, no difference between Jew and Gentile, as to the way and means of their justification:" and the reason assigned by the apostle why there is, and can be, no other way of justification but this, we have in the next verse; namely, *Because all have sinned*, the whole race of mankind, not one mere man excepted; and so will fall short of obtaining the glory of God, and eternal life, if they seek it not in this way. Learn hence, 1. That there is no standing or appearing before God for any creature in a creature's righteousness. There is much unrighteousness in our righteousness, and therefore we cannot stand justified before God in it. Besides, the wisdom of God has appointed another righteousness, or the righteousness of another, even the righteousness of Jesus Christ, to stand before him in: *But now the righteousness of God is manifested, even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ*. Learn, 2. The necessity and excellency of faith; *the righteousness of God is unto all, and upon all that believe*. Faith is the bond of union, the instrument of our justification, the spring of our consolation: *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God*, Rom. v. 1. Render we then unto faith the things which are faith's, as well as unto Christ the things that are Christ's. Learn, 3. That in reference to, or in respect of, our justification before God, there is no difference among believers, ver. 22. *For there is no difference*, that is, no difference as to the way of justification, between Jew and Gentile, male and

female, bond and free; but all, without the righteousness of faith in Christ, must die and be damned to all eternity. There is now a difference amongst believers with respect to their degrees of sanctification, and with respect to their measures of consolation, and will be hereafter with respect to their degrees of glorification. Some saints have more grace and comfort on earth, and shall have higher degrees of glory in heaven, than others; but the justification of all believers is alike. There is the same sin in all, not for measure and degree, but in respect of guilt and obligation to punishment; there is the same price paid by way of satisfaction to divine justice for all; namely, the death of Christ. There is the same righteousness imputed to all, and the same Spirit of holiness imparted amongst all, and the same manifestations of glory designed for all; *thus there is no difference*. And there is no difference amongst believers in respect of truth of grace, but much in respect of strength of grace; no difference amongst them in respect of God's promises, but much difference with respect to their performances; no difference in respect of God's covenant, but much difference in respect of God's counsels, as also in respect of God's dispensations; no difference in respect of God's acceptance, but much in respect of their application; no difference as they are a body in respect of their head, but much difference as they are members of that head. And if there be no difference among believers (as such) before God, why should there be so much difference amongst themselves, as there is oftentimes here in this world? You are all dear, truly dear to God; why should you not be so to one another? Why should not one church and one communion hold you now? Ere long perhaps one prison may, one heaven shall certainly, hold you all.

24 Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Observe here, 1. A glorious privilege vouchsafed to believers, which the scriptures call *justification*, whereby they are judicially acquitted and discharged from

the guilt and punishment of all their sins, and accounted righteous before God. Observe, 2. The efficient cause of our justification. It is *God that justifies*: who can forgive the crime, but the person against whom we have done the wrong? Observe, 3. The moving or impulsive cause, namely, the free grace of God; *Being justified freely by his grace*. Observe, 4. The meritorious cause, the blood-shedding and death of Christ; *through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*. Observe, 5. The final cause; *to declare his righteousness*, not his clemency and mercy only, but his justice and righteousness, especially that attribute which disposes and inclines him to punish sin and sinners. Observe, 6. The instrumental cause of justification, faith: *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, &c.* Some of the Papists, especially Cajetan and a Lapidé, do call faith *Causa applicans* in our justification; verily an unapplied Christ justifies none, saves none. Learn thence, 1. That in order to a sinner's being saved, he must be justified, that is, discharged of, absolved from, the guilt of all sin, upon the account of a complete satisfaction given to divine justice for sin. Learn, 2. That not all and every sinner, but only repenting and believing sinners, are justified by God. Learn, 3. That when the Lord justifies a believing sinner, he doth it freely: *Being justified freely by his grace*. It is an act of mere grace; there is nothing in the creature that can merit or deserve it; then it would be debt, and not grace. Learn, 4. That God's free grace and Christ's full satisfaction were consistent, and both concurring in the believer's justification; we are justified freely by God's grace, yet through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. *Him God having set forth to be a propitiation*. The word *propitiation* is an allusion to the mercy-seat, which covered the ark wherein the law was: this typified Christ, who fully covers our sins, the transgressions of the law, out of God's sight. When therefore the apostle saith, that God hath set forth Christ to be a mercy-seat to us *through faith in his blood*; we have reason to believe the blood of Christ, as our sin-offering, doth make an atonement for us, and renders God propitious to us. Learn, 5. That Almighty God, in the justification of a believing sinner, is not only gracious and merciful, but just and righteous in the most exalted degree; *To declare his righteousness for the remission of sin*. Where note, That the design and end of God in exacting satisfaction from Christ, was to declare his righteousness in the remission of sin; but the apostle would have us take

notice, that our justification is an act of justice as well as mercy, and that God, as he is a just God, cannot condemn the believer, since Christ has satisfied for his sins. O blessed be God! the pardon of sin is built upon that very attribute, the justice of God, which is so affrighting and dreadful to the offending sinner. This attribute, which seemed to be the main bar against remission, is now become the very ground and reason why God remits. Hence saith St. John, *God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*; faithful with respect to his own promise, and just with respect to his Son's satisfaction. Who then can lay any thing to the charge of God's elect, when justice itself doth justify them! Behold here the sweet harmony of the divine attributes in justifying and pardoning the believer! one attribute is not robbed to pay another: neither is one attribute raised upon the ruin of another; but justice and mercy both triumph. And well might the justice of God triumph, for never was it thus honoured before, to have such a person as the Son of God stand at its bar, and such a sum as his Son's blood paid down at once by way of satisfaction to its due demands. O glorious and all-wise contrivance; whereby God made sufficient provision for the reparation of his honour, for the vindication of his holiness, and for the manifestation of his truth and faithfulness; and for the present consolation and eternal salvation of all repenting and believing sinners, to the end of the world.

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.

The apostle having laid down, in the foregoing verses, the nature of justification exactly in the several and respective causes of it, declares in this verse what is the consequent of this doctrine, namely, the excluding of all self-confidence and boasting in ourselves, or in any works done by ourselves: *Where is boasting then?* Learn thence, that man is naturally a very proud creature, prone to boast of and glory in any excellency, either real or supposed, belonging to himself. Learn, 2. That God has taken care to give a check to this insolent pride of man, and to cut off all occasion of boasting from him, 1 Cor. i. 29. *That no flesh should glory in his sight*. Whilst God intended to give man glory, he took a course to cut off all glorying from man. Learn, 3. That the course which the wisdom of God has taken to hide pride from man's eyes, and to cut off all occasion of boasting from him, is by denying him justification by his own works; and ordaining

that the meritorious *cause* of justification should not lie in himself, but in another. Grace must have all the glory: not the law of works, but the law of faith, justifieth and saveth all believers.

28 Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. 29 *Is he* the God of the Jews only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: 30 *Seeing it is* one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

Observe here, 1. The conclusion drawn by the apostle from all that he had been discoursing of in the foregoing chapters; namely, that God's way of justification of a guilty sinner is not by works done by him, but by faith in the Mediator, who hath satisfied the justice of God for him: *Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* Learn thence, That justification from our past sins is by faith alone, without respect to any works of ours, done either before or since conversion. Observe 2. How the apostle doth extend his proposition universally to all sorts of persons, Jews and Gentiles, that is, the whole race of mankind; affirming, that God will justify circumcised believers and uncircumcised believers one and the same way, even by the way of grace and faith: *It is one God which justifieth the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.* Where note, the argument is drawn from the unity or oneness of God, which is not to be understood so much of the unity of his essence and nature, as of his will and purpose; yet as God is one and the same unchangeable God in his nature, so is he as immutable in his will and purpose. Having therefore determined and declared *his way* of justifying all sinners to be one and the same to all nations, both Jew and Gentile, even by faith alone in his son Christ Jesus, no other way is to be expected from that God who is unchangeable in his purpose. Learn thence, that God's way and method of justifying all sinners, both Jews and Gentiles, great and small, is and ever will be the same, namely, by faith alone, without works. What false notions soever men may entertain in their minds about it, and when the pride of men has arraigned the wisdom of God never so much, the apostle's conclusion will remain like a rock unshaken, ver. 28. *Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

31 Do we then make void the law

through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Observe here, The wise and holy caution which our apostle uses to take away the calumny and reproach cast upon him by the adversaries of the doctrine of free justification by faith, as if this would render the law of God void and altogether useless: *Do we then make void the law of God?* As if he had said, "There may be those that will say so, but untruly; for we establish the law: because we acknowledge, that without exact obedience and conformity to the law, both in our nature and in our lives, as a rule of living, there can be no salvation."—Learn hence, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, doth not overthrow but establish the law. Here note, That it is the moral, not ceremonial law, which the apostle speaks of. The ceremonial law is utterly abolished by the gospel; but the moral law is not abolished, but established by the gospel; or if abolished, it is only as a covenant, not as a rule. Christ has relaxed the law in point of danger, but not in point of duty; for the law is holy, just and good, and is not disannulled, but established, by the gospel: because by the gospel we obtain grace, in some measure to fulfil the law, and yield a sincere obedience to it; which, for the sake of Christ's perfect and spotless obedience, shall find a gracious acceptance with God. Therefore with the highest elevation of soul let us bless God for Jesus Christ, and for the gospel-revelation, which has so fully discovered and clearly revealed to us the only way of justification by faith in the Son of God, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. To whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. *Amén.*

CHAP. IV.

In the close of the foregoing chapter our apostle laid down a positive and peremptory conclusion, that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law. In this chapter he undertakes to confirm the truth of that conclusion, by instantiating in the patriarch Abraham, the father of the faithful, who did not find justification and acceptance with God by virtue of his circumcision in the flesh, or any other works of obedience performed by him in the law, but by virtue of his faith, which was imputed and accounted to him for righteousness. From which instance of Abraham's justification by faith, the apostle infers the justification of all believers with him; for who doubts but that the children are justified after the same manner that their father was? This being the design and scope of the chapter, let us observe the force of the apostle's argument—verse the first.

WHAT shall we say then that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.

As if the apostle had said, "What shall we say? Shall any one affirm, that Abraham our father found or obtained righteousness by or according to the flesh; that is, by being circumcised in the flesh, or by any works of righteousness which he had done! surely no: for if Abraham were justified by circumcision, or any other works of his own, he hath *whereof* to glory; that is, ground of boasting in these works, by which he was thus justified. But manifest it is, that he had not *whereof* to boast and glory before God; therefore he was not justified by circumcision, nor any works of his own." Learn hence, That no righteousness of our own, no services we can perform, are sufficient to procure our justification in the sight of God; for if we are justified by our works, it must be by works either before faith or after faith. Not before faith; for the corruption of nature and man's impotent condition thereby, will give check to any such thought. Surely, unrighteousness cannot make us righteous, no more than impurity can make us clean. Nor do works after faith justify; for then a believer is not justified upon his believing, and faith is not the justifying grace, but only a preparation to those works which justify; which is contrary to the whole strain of the apostle throughout the epistle, who ascribes justification to faith in the blood of Christ without works. In short, no righteousness of man is perfect; therefore no righteousness of man can be justifying. There is nothing that a man doth, but it is defective, and consequently has matter of condemnation in it: now that which is condemning, cannot be justifying: that which falls short of the holiness of the law, can never free us from the condemnatory sentence and curse of the law. Now all works after faith fall short of that perfection which the law requireth. Learn, 2. That the design of God was to justify us in such a way, as to strip us of pride. *Not of works, lest any man should boast*, says the apostle often. We are justified by faith, to exclude boasting, which would not have been excluded by the law of works.

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the

ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Observe here, 1. The account which the scripture gives of Abraham's justification: it was by faith alone. *He believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness*; that is, he firmly believed the promise of God, that he would give him a son, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. And by means of this faith, he was reckoned or esteemed righteous before God, and not by means of his works. Observe, 2. The apostle's argument to prove that Abraham was justified by faith, and not by works: had he works of perfect holiness, then in strict justice a reward might have been expected by him as a due debt, and not given him in a way of grace and favour. For to him that *worketh*, that is, with a design and intent to obtain justification by his works, is the reward reckoned not of grace, but of debt, he having performed all that was required in order to his being righteous before God. But to him that *worketh not*; that is, who worketh not to the intent and end forementioned, namely to procure justification by working, but seeks that in a way of believing, his faith is counted for righteousness. To him that *worketh not, but believeth, &c.* We must not understand it absolutely; for he that believeth worketh; but *secundum quid*, after a sort; he is said not to work, because he worketh not with a design to stand righteous before God by his works. Again, by him that *worketh not*, we are not to understand an idle, lazy believer, that takes no care of the duties of obedience; no, an idle faith is an ineffectual faith, and can never be a saving faith. But the meaning is, he worketh not in a law sense, to the ends and intentions of the first covenant, to make up a righteousness to cover himself by his own working. Being convinced of his utter inability to work out his own righteousness by the law, and seeing all his endeavours to obey the law fall short of righteousness, he is therefore said in a law sense not to work, because he doth not work so as to answer the purpose and end of the law, which accepts of nothing short of perfect and complete obedience. And whereas it is here said, that *God justifieth the ungodly*; the meaning is, such as have been ungodly, not such as continue so. The apostle describes the temper and frame of their hearts and lives before justification, and not after it; as it found them, not as it leaves them. True, Christ justifies the ungodly, yet such as continue ungodly are not justified by him: we must bring credentials from our sanctification, to bear witness to the truth of our justification.

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7 *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.* 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Observe here, That to the example of Abraham, the apostle subjoins the testimony of David, *Psal. xxxii.* who describes the blessedness of that man to whom God imputeth righteousness, to wit, the righteousness of the Mediator, without any works brought before God to be justified by; saying, *Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered and iniquity not imputed.* Sin, in respect of the offence, is remitted; in respect of the filth or turpitude of it, is covered, in respect of the punishment, not imputed. This heap of words serve only to amplify and set forth the abundant grace of God in the act of pardoning sin. Learn hence, 1. That to pardon sin is God's prerogative; he forgiveth iniquity, and covereth transgression. 2. That pardon of sin is a covering of sin; not such a covering of sin, as that God cannot see it in a justified person to chastise him for it; but so covered as not to punish him with wrath and condemnation for it. Learn, 3. That God's act in pardoning and covering sin, is extensive and perfect, full and final. Iniquity, transgression, and sin, is forgiven, covered, and not imputed. Learn, 4. That transcendent is the blessedness of those whose iniquity is pardoned, and their transgressions covered. *Blessedness*, says the original, belongs to the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered, and to whom the Lord will not impute transgressions.

9 *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

Here the apostle moves the question, namely, Whether the forementioned blessedness of pardon of sin and justification by faith, belongs to the circumcised Jews only, or to the uncircumcised Gentiles also? Which question carries with it the force of a strong affirmation, that seeming faith was imputed to Abraham for right-

eousness many years before he was circumcised, therefore the uncircumcised Gentiles, as well as the circumcised Jews, shall by faith be made partakers of the same blessedness, unto which Abraham was entitled before he was circumcised. Learn hence, That God has appointed one and the same way and method for the justification and salvation of all persons, circumcised and uncircumcised, Jew and Gentile, honourable and ignoble; namely, justification by faith in the blood of his Son, without which no church privileges, or spiritual prerogatives whatsoever, will entitle them to real blessedness. *Cometh this blessedness on the circumcision only or upon the uncircumcision also?* Abraham believed unto righteousness before he was circumcised; therefore the Gentiles by faith shall be accounted righteous, though they never be circumcised.

11 And he received the sign of circumcision; a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had*, yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: 12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being yet uncircumcised.

Here the apostle declares the reason why, and the end for which, Abraham was circumcised, seeing he was justified by faith in the promised Messiah, long before circumcision. He tells us, that Abraham received circumcision as a sign and seal of the covenant made with him, and to his seed, *Gen. xvi.* and as an obligation that the righteousness of faith was the true way for a sinner to become righteous; which righteousness Abraham had obtained whilst he was uncircumcised, that so he might be the father in a spiritual sense of all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, who imitated him in his faith, and in the holiness and obedience of his life. Note here, 1. The person instituting the sacrament of circumcision; God and not Abraham. *He received circumcision*; that is by the appointment of God he was circumcised. Sacraments must be of divine institution, not of human invention. The church can make no sacraments; her duty is with care and caution to administer them. There is a fourfold word requisite to a sacrament: a word of institution, a word of command, a

word of promise, a word of blessing. The elements are ciphers; 'tis the institution makes them figures. Divine institution is as necessary to a sacrament as a royal inscription is to current money. Note, 2. The nature of sacraments in general, and of circumcision in particular. They are signs and seals: *He received the sign of circumcision: a seal of the righteousness of faith.* The circumcision, 1. Was a sign and token of the covenant which God made with Abraham and the Jews, It was a commemorative sign of God's covenant with Abraham: a representative sign of Abraham's faith and obedience towards God: a demonstrative sign of original sin, and the depravity of human nature: a discriminating and distinguishing sign of the true church and people of God from all the rest of the world, an initiating sign by which all strangers, that were received into the commonwealth of Israel, were admitted into the Jewish church: and, lastly it was a prefigurative sign of baptism, which in the Christian church was to succeed in the room of circumcision. 2. Circumcision was not a sign only, but a seal also: *A seal of the righteousness of faith*: it was a seal both on God's part, and on Abraham's also. A seal on God's part, to confirm all the promises made to Abraham and his seed. 3. A seal both on his and their parts; to bind them to renounce the service of all other gods, and to oblige them to the observation of the whole law. Note, lastly, the character and description here given of true believers; they are such as *walk in the steps of faithful Abraham.* They have not only Abraham to their father, but they walk in the footsteps of their father's faith. As Abraham readily obeyed the call of God, so do they. As Abraham left his idolatrous country and kindred, and though he had opportunity of returning, yet never returned more; so do the faithful sons and daughters of Abraham leave all known sins' and no temptations can prevail with them to return to the delightful practice of them. Did Abraham break through all impediments, difficulties, and discouragements whatsoever? so do and will all those that tread in the faith of their father Abraham surmount all difficulties, bid defiance to all dangers, that they may yield a ready, cheerful, and persevering obedience to the commands of the God of Abraham. Few of the children of Abraham's flesh, but all the children of his faith, do thus walk in the steps of their renowned father.

13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world. *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed through the

law, but through the righteousness of faith.

That is, the great promise which God made to Abraham and his seed, that they should possess that rich and pleasant part of the world, the land of Canaan, under which also heaven itself was typically promised and comprehended, was not made upon condition of their performing perfect obedience to the law, but they were to obtain it by faith; that is, by trusting to, and depending upon, the gracious promise of a faithful God. Note here, The argument couched for justification by faith without works, which is the apostle's grand scope, design, and drift: it runs thus, "If the promise made to the father of the faithful was accomplished, not by legal obedience, but by the righteousness of faith; then it follows, that all his children are justified by faith, as Abraham their father was. But the promise of the earthly inheritance, and under it of the heavenly one, was accomplished not by the law, but by the righteousness of Abraham's faith; therefore justification is not to be expected by the works of the law, but by faith alone."

14 For if they which are of the law *be* heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect;

That is, If they which seek to be justified by the works of the law be heirs of this promised inheritance, then faith, that is, the way of justification by faith prescribed by God, is to no purpose; for to what end should we by faith seek righteousness in another, if by our legal obedience we can find it in ourselves? Here then lies couched another argument, to confirm the apostle's doctrine of justification by faith: thus, That, only justifies, unto which a gracious promise of justification is made; but no such promise is made to any man for his weak and imperfect keeping of the law, but for his believing there is; therefore by the law there can be no justification, but by faith only.

15 Because the law worketh wrath, For where no law is, *there is* no transgression.

Here the apostle suggests another reason, why no justification can be expected by the law, because it condemns rather than justifies. *The law worketh wrath*: That is, it discovers the wrath of God due to our transgression, and then pronounces condemnation upon the transgressor; *for were there no law, either natural or revealed, there would be no transgression, and consequently no condemnation.* Here observe,

1. The use of the law; it discovers sin, it convinces of sin, it condemns for sin, it denounces the wrath of God due unto sin. And note, 2. The apostle's argument for the use of the law: he infers an utter impossibility of being justified by the law. That which condemns cannot justify; but the law of God condemns the sinner for his transgression; therefore it can never be the instrument and means of his justification.

16 Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace: to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

The apostle here assigns a double cause, why the wisdom of God has appointed justification and salvation to be obtained in the way of faith; namely, 1. That it might be of free and undeserved grace and favour; for to be justified by faith and by grace, are all one with the apostle. And, 2. That the promise might be sure to all the seed; That is, that God's promise might stand firm and sure to all the believing seed of Abraham, not only to all the children of his flesh, to whom the law was given, but to all the children of his faith, even Gentiles as well as Jews; he being the father of all that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles. Learn hence, That if our justification and salvation did depend upon our performing perfect obedience to the law, it would never be sure, but always uncertain, because of our impotency and weakness to keep and observe it. The apostle, chap. viii. 3, tells us, That the law is weak through the flesh: though the truth is, the law is not weak to us, but we are weak to that; the law has the same authority for commanding that ever it had, but we have not the same ability for obeying. 'Tis our wickedness that is the sole cause of the law's weakness: had every man the same integrity, the law would have the same ability that ever it had, both to justify and save us.

17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth these things which be not, as though they were.

Our apostle in this, and the following verses, enters upon a high commendation of Abraham's faith, magnifying and extoll-

ing the same for and upon account of sundry excellencies which are found in it. And here, 1. He takes notice how Abraham's faith was strongly acted and exercised on the Almighty power of God: *He believed in God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that are not as though they were*; that is, the Lord having promised to make Abraham the father of many nations, when he had no seed, nor was ever likely to have any, he believed the things to be both credible and possible, because God had spoken it, how improbable soever. And although, with respect to generation, he looked upon Sarah's body, and his own, as good as dead; for she was barren, and past bearing, and he was an hundred years old, and past all hopes of having a child; yet he exercised his faith on the promise and power of God, *who quickeneth the dead*, that is, his own dead body, and Sarah's barren womb. *And calleth those things which be not*, (that is, the Gentiles, which were not then a people,) *as if they were*. Learn hence, that it is a noble act and exercise of faith to believe God upon his bare word, and to assent to truth, though never so improbable. As whatever God doeth is good, because he doeth it; so whatever God says is true, because he speaks it: and accordingly, faith, which is an assent of the understanding to what God reveals, depends upon the veracity of God, for making good his own word, and fulfilling his own promise. Faith has a threefold excellency: it assents to the truths of God, though never so improbable; it puts men upon duties, though seemingly unreasonable; (witness Abraham's offering up Isaac;) and it enables to bear sufferings, be they never so afflictive. But from believing plain contradictions and impossibilities, as the church of Rome would have us in the point of transubstantiation, faith desires there to be excused. Observe here, 2. That as Abraham's faith exceedingly honoured God; so God highly honours Abraham's faith, making him like himself, a father of many nations. As God is an universal Father, not of one, but of all nations, so was Abraham; as God is their spiritual Father, not by carnal generation, so was Abraham. God made faithful Abraham like himself, a father not of this or that nation only, but universally of all believers among all nations, believing after his example. Thus Abraham's faith honours God, and God honours Abraham's faith, styling him the father of the faithful throughout all generations.

18 Who against hope believed in

hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform.

Here St. Paul farther expatiates in the commendation of Abraham's faith, telling us, *That against hope, he believed in hope*; that is, he had a strong hope, a firm faith and trust in the promise and power of God, against all natural grounds of hope; namely, that he should certainly have a son, and a seed like the stars of heaven for multitude. He farther adds, *That he considered not the deadness of his own body, nor the barrenness of Sarah's womb; neither staggered at the promise through unbelief*; that is, he regarded not any difficulties which lay in the way of his faith, he admitted no doubts or questions touching the promise or power of God; but without at all disputing, depending fully upon God for the performance of his own promise, and so gave God the glory of his omnipotency and faithfulness. Observe here, 1. What was the ground of Abraham's faith; namely, the special promise, yea, the absolute promise of God, that he should have a son. Observe, 2. The height and measure of his faith: *He was strong in faith, and staggered not through unbelief*; he was fully persuaded of God's all-sufficiency. It is a metaphor, taken from ships that come into the harbour with full sail. Thus was it with Abraham, there was not any sail of his soul but what was filled with the wind of assurance. As a ship with full gale and strong sail is carried to the haven against winds and waves; so Abraham, by the strength of his faith, overcame all waves of doubts and difficulties beating upon his mind. Observe, 3. What was the fruit and issue, the end and event, of Abraham's faith; it brought glory to God: *He was strong in faith, giving glory to God*. All faith glorifies God truly, but strong faith glorifies him abundantly; it gives him the glory of his power and faithfulness, goodness and truth. Question, 1. But how could Abraham's body be said to be dead, when he had several children afterwards by Keturah, even six sons forty

years after Sarah's death? *Ans.* Abraham's and Sarah's bodies received now a blessing, or new generative faculty, from God, which rendered them capable of begetting and bearing children, when by nature they were not so. *Quest. 2.* Was Abraham's faith so strong as to exclude all doubting? Did not he distrust when he said, *Shall a child be born to Abraham that is an hundred years old? and Sarah that is ninety years old, bear?* Gen. xxi. *Ans.* These words are not words of doubting, but inquiring; they proceeded from a desire to be further informed how these things could be. But Abraham laughed, and Sarah also, at the mention of a son. True, they did both laugh, but not both alike; Abraham's laughter proceeded from admiration and joy, but Sarah's from diffidence and mistrust; and accordingly we find Sarah reprimanded, but not Abraham reprehended, for laughing: *Abraham staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.*

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

Our apostle having in the former part of this chapter declared the manner of our justification, from an instance of Abraham, which having at last pursued, lest we should think that was Abraham's personal privilege and did not concern us, he applies in the verses before us, Abraham's example unto us, assuring us, that as Abraham's faith was imputed to him for righteousness, because he depended upon the almighty power of God in the promise; and also looked by faith to the Messias promised, who was to come of his seed; so, says the apostle, was this written for our sakes as well as Abraham's, for our comfort and encouragement, to assure us that faith shall be imputed to us also for righteousness, if we firmly trust in God through the merits and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Where observe, The apostle's argument fully overthrows the Socinian doctrine, which teaches that the godly, under the Old Testament, were not justified in the same way with us under the New; whereas the apostle fully proves, that Abraham, and all the children of Abraham, who walk in the steps of him their father, are justified alike; and, accordingly it was not thus written of him for his sake alone, that his faith was imputed

to him for righteousness, but for the benefit of us also; to whom the like faith shall be imputed for justification, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead. Learn hence, That the doctrine of justification by faith, through the imputed righteousness of the Mediator, is no new doctrine, but as old as Abraham. Some are much offended at this word *imputed*; but as the pious bishops, Downham and Davenant, on *Justification*, well observe, it is no less than ten times mentioned, either in the term or in the signification of it, in this chapter. Their arguments for, and answer to, Bellarmine's objections against the imputed righteousness of the Mediator, run thus: "If Christ's righteousness be not imputed, it is not accepted; if it be not accepted, it is not performed, and so there will be no redemption by Jesus Christ; without this we shall make Christ little, very little, in the justifying of sinners. And why is Christ called the Lord our righteousness, and how are we said to be made the righteousness of God in him. And why is faith so infinitely pleasing to God, but because faith brings to God a righteousness which is highly pleasing to him, even that of the Mediator; for there is no standing before God for any creature in a creature-righteousness." The popish objections run thus: *Obj. 1.* If Christ's righteousness be imputed to us, then may we be reputed redeemers of the world as well as he was. *Ans.* It may as well be said, the debtor may be accounted the surety, because the surety's payment is accepted for the debtor. *Obj. 2.* If Christ's righteousness be imputed to us as ours, then we ought to be accounted as righteous as himself. *Ans.* It may be as well argued and concluded, that the debtor is as rich a man as the surety, because the surety pays the debtor's debts. *Obj. 3.* If Christ's righteousness be properly imputed to us, then our unrighteousness was properly imputed to him, and he may be strictly and truly called a sinner. *Ans.* Just as we should say, "If the acceptance of the surety's payment acquits the debtor, then the surety is as bad an husband, and as much of a bankrupt, as the debtor himself." *Obj. 4.* But if Christ's righteousness be ours, no need of any righteousness of our own. *Ans.* We plead for the meritorious righteousness of Christ to answer the demands of the law, and for a personal righteousness of our own, to answer the commands of the gospel. Let us render to all their due; let us render unto Christ the things which are Christ's, to faith the things which are faith's, and to good works the things which are theirs. Let us aw-

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fully adore the wisdom of God, who has made Christ unto us *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. To relieve our ignorance and folly, he is our *wisdom*; to discharge us from guilt, and free us from condemnation, he is our *righteousness*; to relieve us against the filth and pollution, the power and dominion, of sin, he is our *sanctification*; and to rescue us from our miserable captivity to Satan, he is our *redemption*. Blessed be God for the benefit of imputed righteousness to such as live in the practice and power of inherent holiness. True, our sanctification and holiness, when most perfect, cannot justify us before God: but it will evidence our justification before men, and be a witness to our own consciences that we are accepted in the Beloved.

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

In this one verse we have an abridgment of the whole gospel; the death and resurrection of Christ declared, and the benefit and advantages of both assigned. 1. For his death: *he was delivered for our offences*. Here note, 1. The person delivered; he, that is, Christ Jesus the righteous, the Lord our righteousness. Note, 2. The person delivering, not expressed, but necessarily implied and understood. Judas delivered him, the Jews delivered him, God the Father delivered him, and Christ himself delivered himself. All these did one and the same act, but not for one and the same end; Judas delivered him for gain, the Jews for envy; the Father delivered him out of love, and Christ delivered himself in great compassion to a lost world. Note, 3. Unto what was he delivered, namely, unto death, even the death of the cross. This in God was an act of the highest justice, in Christ an act of wonderful obedience, in the Jews an act of the highest wickedness. Note, 4. For whom and for what he was delivered: for us and for our offences. It notes the vicegerency of his sufferings, not barely for our good as the final cause, and for our sins as the meritorious cause; but for us, in our room, place, and stead, dying under an imputation of guilt, and dying as the sacrificed beast for the expiation of that guilt. The original word here for *offences*, signifies great falls, grievous offences, and heinous crimes. The sacrificed Lamb was delivered and died to expiate the guilt of great sins, and to make atonement for the greatest sinners. Note, 5. It is here said, that Christ was *delivered*, rather than *died*, for our offences, to lead us to the con-

consideration of the first cause of his suffering for us; namely, the determinate counsel of God, pursuant to which there was a concession or permission given to wicked instruments to shed his blood; his own Father delivering him up to death for our offences. Learn hence, That our sins were not only the occasions, but the moving and impulsive cause of Christ's sufferings. He died as a sacrifice to atone an offended Deity; as the sacrifices of old were brought to the altar, and there slain, so Christ, substituting himself in our room and stead, was brought to the altar of his cross, and there died as a victim or expiatory sacrifice for our sins. Thus *he was delivered for our offences*. Observe next, our Lord's resurrection asserted: *He was raised again*; and its end assigned, *for our justification*. Christ as our surety was under the arrest of death; but having given satisfaction by his sufferings, our discharge was published to the world by his resurrection. As by dying in our stead he bare the curse of the law: so by rising again as a common person, we receive our acquittal from the hand of the judge. His death was our payment, his resurrection our discharge: *He was raised again for our justification*. Learn thence, That Christ's resurrection was the cause of our justification: not the meritorious cause, for that was his death and bloodshed; for the declarative and perfective cause of our justification. His resurrection was a declaration of our justification, the justice of God thereby declaring itself satisfied by its prisoner being released. His resurrection is also the perfective cause of our justification. The work of redemption wrought for us by his death, is perfected, and made effectual, by his resurrection. This makes our redemption complete, which otherwise had been partial and imperfect; nay, none at all. 'Tis upon Christ, as raised, that our faith must be settled: had he not been raised from the dead, faith in his death had had no foundation, for it had been an unaccountable thing to believe in one that lay under the power of death. By Christ's resurrection, the efficacy of his death was declared to all the world; therefore, says the apostle, chap. viii. *Who shall condemn us, when Christ hath died for us? yea, rather, is risen again*. As our redemption was not in its glory till Christ's resurrection, so neither is our faith in its full strength and vigour, till it eyes him, *who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*.

CHAP. V.

The apostle having in the foregoing chapters asserted, and by many arguments demonstrated, the necessity of a sinner's justification by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ; whom God the

Father, in infinite mercy and compassion to us, set forth to be a propitiation for us, delivering him to death for our offences, and raising him again for our justification; in this chapter he declares the sweet fruits and benefits, the blessed effects and advantages, which flow from the foregoing privilege, and redound to all such as are in a justified condition; namely, peace, with God, perseverance in grace, patience under affliction, joy in tribulation, hope of glory, &c. But let us consider them distinctly.

THEREFORE being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ:

The first blessed effect and sweet fruit of our justification by faith, is peace and reconciliation with God. Pardon and peace go together, and accompany one another; a sinner being discharged from guilt, and thereby from his obnoxiousness to God's wrath, is instantly brought into a state of friendship and reconciliation with God; for there is no middle state betwixt his favour and his wrath. Learn hence, 1. That peace is proclaimed in heaven betwixt God and every justified person whatsoever, the enmity betwixt God and such a soul being taken away. Peace, I say, is proclaimed in the sinner's conscience. A person may be in a state of peace, and yet want the sense of peace. Again, there is a two-fold peace with God; one which is opposite to God's hatred as an enemy; the other opposed to God's paternal anger as a father. Now the apostle here speaks of the former: *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God*; that is, God has no more hostile enmity against us, and will not satisfy his justice upon us, by punishing of us; but if we offend him, we shall certainly fall under his frowns and chastisements, and feel the effects of his heavy displeasure as an angry father! With this agrees that of the learned and pious bishop, Davenant: *Deus absolvit justificatum ab omni pena satisfactoria, sed non ab omni pena medicinali et castigatoria*. Learn, 2. That our reconciliation with God is settled upon a sure foundation by Jesus Christ: *We have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus*: that is, through him as a Mediator betwixt God and us; he made peace by the blood of his cross, Col. i. 20. that is, by his blood shed upon the cross, his meritorious satisfaction brought us into a state of peace and reconciliation, and his prevailing intercession keeps us in it: *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ*.

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

A second benefit which flows from jus-

tification by faith, is our admission to grace and favour with God. This is a privilege beyond the former: a traitor may be pardoned by his prince, and yet not admitted into the presence of his prince: as Absalom's crime was forgiven, but he must not see his father's face. But by Christ's mediation, every justified person meets with divine acceptance; yea, he is not only brought into a state of grace and favour, but he stands and abides in it. No sufferings from God, no sufferings from man for God's sake, no temptations, no tribulations, nor persecutions, can cause God to cast him out of his grace and favour; having access by faith into it, he shall stand and abide in it. True, he may fall under his Father's rod, but he shall never fall from his Father's love: *Through Christ we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.* A third benefit follows, *We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* Here observe, 1. The happy union and connection between *grace* and *glory*: grace is glory begun, and glory is grace consummated; grace is glory in the bud, glory is grace in the fruits; grace is the lowest degree of glory, and glory the highest degree of grace. Happy soul that art partaker of the first-fruits of grace, thou shalt ere long reap the crop of glory. Observe, 2. A justified person has the hope of future glory, and always may, and sometimes can, rejoice in the hope; *We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* He hopes for the glory of God, and well he may, for it is purchased for him: it is promised to him; he has it already in the first-fruits and earnest of it; it is prepared for him, and he is preparing for that; and he rejoices in the hope of his glory; believing it to be great and glorious, sure and certain, never decaying, everlasting.

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.

Here the apostle mentioneth a fourth benefit flowing from justification by faith; and that is, glorying in their present sufferings. He told us before, that justified persons being at peace with God, rejoiced in hopes of future glory; but, says he, this is not all, they glory in their present tribulations also. Here note, 1. What sort of sufferings they are which the saints glory in; they are tribulations, that is, such trials

and persecutions as did befall them for the profession of the gospel. In these a child of God may rejoice, yea, boast and glory, as a soldier doth of his marks, wounds, and scars, received in the wars; but not in those sufferings, afflictions, and trials, which we bring upon ourselves as punishments for our sins; these we have no more reason to glory in, than a corrected child has to glory in his whipping: *What glory is it when we are buffeted for our faults?* Note, 2. To what a height and heroic pitch the spirit of a justified believer may be raised under sufferings for Christ: *He may glory in tribulation.* It is an high strain of spiritualness in bearing afflictions when a Christian can say, *I love to bear*: though I love not that which I suffer, and that which I bear, yet I love to bear what I suffer. But it is a higher pitch than this, to say with the apostle, *I rejoice in my sufferings*, Col. i. 24. For joy is a degree beyond love; yet it is a degree higher still to take pleasure in reproaches and distresses for Christ's sake, 2 Cor. xii. 10. For pleasure is a degree beyond joy; but to *glory in tribulations*, is beyond them all: it is more than to love, more than to rejoice, more than to take pleasure in them. O the power of faith in Christ, and love unto him, to support and uphold the soul; yea, cause it to glory under the sharpest sufferings and tribulations for him! Note, 3. That it is not in the tribulations themselves that believers glory, but in the sweet issue, happy fruits, and gracious effects of them; finding that by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, *tribulation worketh patience*; that is, exerciseth and increaseth patience, and patience begetteth and giveth experience of God's gracious presence with us, of his assistance of us, and of his faithfulness towards us, in and under all our afflictions: and *experience* of these things *worketh in us hope* of reward. Here observe, how one grace generates and begets another; graces have a generation one from another; though they have all but one generation from the Spirit of Christ. Observe also, That it is not tribulation in its own nature, but when sanctified by the blessed Spirit, that by a happy gradation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. For when affliction is not sanctified, but meets with a stubborn spirit, Lord, what dreadful effects doth it produce! Then tribulation excites impatience, impatience causeth perplexity, perplexity despair, and despair confusion. Note, 4. The effect and property of the believer's hope, *It maketh not ashamed*; his hope will not make him ashamed, neither will he be ever ashamed

of his hope: frustrated hopes fill men with confusion and shame; the justified person shall not find his hopes of glory frustrated, but exceeded; and the reason is added, why the Christian's hope will not deceive or shame him, namely, *because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost*. That is, the Holy Spirit doth in time of tribulation testify his love to the hearts of his people, which causes them to glory in tribulation. Learn hence, That in time of affliction, especially of persecution for the sake of Christ, good men have a more sensible feeling of God's love shed abroad in their hearts by the blessed Spirit, both to prepare them for trials, and to support them under them. St. Peter calls this a joy unspeakable; it has the very scent and taste of heaven in it, and there is but a gradual difference betwixt it and the joys of heaven: no sooner doth the Holy Spirit shed forth the love of God into the believer's heart, by clearing up his interest in the promise, and his title to eternal glory, but the soul is prepared to rejoice in affliction, yea, to glory in tribulation; and it will be as impossible to hinder it, as it is to hinder a man from satisfaction when he is most delighted and pleased: *We glory in tribulation, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost*.

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly,

In this verse the apostle sets forth the efficacy of Christ's love towards us before justification; he had a love towards us when we were sinners; which prevailed with him to die for sinners: *When we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly*. Note here, 1. Man's condition by nature described, a state of enmity, *ungodly*; and a state of impotency, *without strength*. We were without strength, and so wanted help: ungodly, and so refused help. Man is but an impotent and an obstinate creature; without power to resist justice, and without affection to desire mercy: so weak, that he trembles at the appearance of a worm; and yet so wicked, that he lifts up his head against heaven. The state of unregeneracy, is both a state of enmity and a state of impotency. Note, 2. The ways and means found out for our recovery, the death of Christ; *When we were yet without strength, Christ died for us*. Though he found the whole race of mankind buried in the ruins of their lapsed state, yet he did not leave them so, but died for them. Note, 3. The seasonableness of the means interposed for our recovery: *it was in due*

time that Christ died; that is, in the fulness of time appointed by God the Father, and determined in his decrees and purpose. Here we may remark, That Christ came not in the beginning of time, in the infancy and morning of the world, (though it was then promised that he should come,) nor yet did he stay till the last period and end of time; but came as it were in the middle of time, which is called *the fulness of time*, Gal. iv. 4. and here *due time*. Christ came not for our recovery as soon as ever we were fallen, that mankind might be the more sensible of the badness of their condition; had we been instantly cured as soon as we complained, we should neither have apprehended the danger of our disease, nor esteemed the kindness of our physician: neither did he stay till the last period and end of time before he came, that the faith and expectation of his church might not be put upon too long and severe an exercise. The patriarchs believed in Christ that was to come; the apostles in Christ then present; and Christians now believe in him that long since did come, and is gone again. So that the apostle might well say here, *That in due time Christ died*.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

Here the apostle amplifies, extols, and magnifies the love of Christ, in dying for us when we were enemies to him; by comparing his love to us, with our love to one another. He intimates to us, that amongst men it is very rare and seldom known, that one man will lay down his life to save another's; but if so, it must be for a very extraordinary friend, for a person of uncommon goodness, and of eminent worth; *For*, says he, *scarcely for a righteous man will one die*. As if he had said, Such a thing may be, but it is scarcely ever known, that a person will lay down his life for another, though he be a very righteous, innocent, and truly honest man. Perhaps for a good man, that is, for a very kind and bountiful benefactor; for some person of rare charity, and extraordinary goodness; for a man that is a public blessing and common good to the whole community; some person from a sense of strong obligations, would even dare to die. The scope of the apostle is this; to set forth the transcendency of Christ's love in dying for the ungodly; to show that it is beyond all human example, and that there can be no resemblance, much less any parallel of it: *He loved us, and gave himself for us*. Had he only as an

advocate spoken and pleaded for us, his condescension had been admirable, and his love unspeakable. But to die, yea, to die for us, to be not only our Mediator, but Redeemer; not only our Redeemer, but our ransom: here is love beyond comparison. Blessed Jesus, was ever love like thine!

8 But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Observe here, How the scripture distinctly represents the love of God in giving Christ to die for us, as well as Christ's love in dying for us; *God commendeth his love*: declared, expressed, and made manifest his love to us. Christ's death is often represented in scripture as an instance of the great love of the Father towards us; because his wisdom did contrive this way for our redemption, and he has graciously accepted of his Son's sufferings in our stead. Verily, the giving heaven itself, with all its joys and glory, is not so full and perfect a demonstration of the love of God, as the giving of his Son to die for us, especially if we consider one endearing circumstance of this love of God, which *he commended towards us*: namely, that it warmed the heart of God from all eternity, and was never interrupted in that vast duration. Our salvation by Christ is the product of God's eternal counsel, *Acts ii. 23*, that is, the fruit of his everlasting love; before the world began, we were in the eyes, yea, in and upon the heart of God. In a word, well might the apostle say, That *God commended his love towards us*, forasmuch as in common esteem he expressed greater love to us than to Christ himself: for God, in giving him to die for us, declared to us, that our salvation was more dear to him than the life of his own Son. God repented that he made man, but never that he gave his Son to redeem man. Learn hence, That the death of Christ for sinners is an evident demonstration of the love of God the Father, and of the Lord Jesus Christ: *God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

As if the apostle had said, He that loved us when we were enemies, will not damn

us now we are his children. He that reconciled us to himself by his Son's death, that is, for the sake of his Son's sufferings and satisfaction, will certainly save us from wrath to come by his life, or for the sake of his prevailing intercession. *If when enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son.* Here note, That this word *if* is not a word of doubting, but of argumentation. The apostle supposes it a known truth, or a principle yielded by all Christians. That the death of Christ was to reconcile sinners unto God. Learn hence, That Christ has reconciled God and us, by the satisfaction which his death has made to the justice of God for our sins; and, reparation being made, the enmity ceases on God's part, if the terms of reconciliation be accepted on our part. Our reconciliation with God, when enemies, was effected, 1. By the sacrifice of the death of Christ, which was the price that purchased it. 2. By the application of that benefit to us through faith. And, 3. By Christ's potent and eternal intercession, whereby our state of reconciliation is confirmed, and all future breaches prevented; for if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, even Christ the righteous, 1 *John ii. 1, 2*. We dare not say, that God could not have reconciled us any other way but this; but we may safely say, that no way like this was so expressive of his love to us; it was the most obliging and endearing way imaginable, to reconcile us to himself by the death of his Son.

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

As if the apostle had said, "And moreover, we are not only reconciled to, but we glory and rejoice in, God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement, or reconciliation." Here note, The Christian's great duty to rejoice, and cause of that his joy, his reconciliation with God: and the means by which he obtains reconciliation with God, *through our Lord Jesus Christ*; that is, through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and through faith in his death. Hence learn, That our rejoicing, as to reconciliation with God, depends upon our believing; it is none, if our faith be none: little, if our faith be little; great, if our faith be great. No man can rejoice in an unknown good: let us therefore give all diligence to clear up to ourselves our interest in this atonement. Christ thought it worth his blood to purchase it; surely then it is worth our pains to clear it, in order to our

rejoicing in it. He that seeks not reconciliation with God, is an enemy to his soul; and he that rejoices not in the reconciliation, is an enemy to his own comfort.

12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned :

The doctrine of original sin is not more difficult to be understood, than it is necessary to be known; the apostle here declares the manner how sin and death entered the world, namely, by the fall of Adam, the first man : *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.* Note, 1. An unhappy parent; namely, Adam: by him sin entered into the world. 2. An unhappy posterity; namely, the whole world, proceeding from and coming out of the loins of Adam, in whom all have sinned. 3. An unhappy portion; sin and death. Sin entered by Adam, and death entered by sin. This was the legacy which Adam left to all his posterity. Now the sad and mournful truth which the scripture contains is this, That our first parent by his transgression hath entailed a miserable inheritance, an unhappy portion of sin and death, upon all his posterity." Adam's sin became ours: 1. By meritorious imputation; God treated with him, not as a private person, but as *caput gentis*, as the root and parent of all mankind. Hence a comparison is often made between the first and second Adam; the grace of the one, with the sin of the other; the life conveyed by the one, and the death transmitted by the other. By Adam we were cast, by Christ we were cleared; cursed in Adam, crowned in Christ. Now this comparison would be wholly insignificant, if Adam had not been looked upon as the representative of us all. 2. The sin of Adam is derived to us by way of inherision: we have received from him a depravity of nature, an evil disposition, a propensity to all mischief, an aversion to all good. The sin of Adam transmitted to us, doth not only cause guilt upon our persons, but filth upon our natures; not only lays a charge to us, but throws a stain upon us. 3. We make Adam's sin our own by imitation, by treading in the steps of his disobedience. Every sin we commit in defiance of the threatenings of God, is a justifying of Adam's rebellion against God; and accordingly we die by our own folly, as well as by his fall; our destruction is of ourselves by our actual rebellions, and we shall at the great day charge our sin and misery upon ourselves, not on

God, not on Satan, not on instruments, not on our first parents.

13 (For until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

The apostle having asserted the doctrine of original sin in the former verse, he prosecutes and pursues it in this and the following verses: asserting, That it is evident all have sinned, because sin was always in the world; not only after the giving of the law by Moses, but also before, even from the beginning of the world to that time. As if the apostle had said, There was certainly a law given before there was a law written; a law given to Adam, before a law written by Moses: now this law was either the law of nature written in Adam's heart, or the positive law of God given to Adam, against which law men were capable of offending before the law of Moses was written; otherwise sin would not have been imputed to them, for sin is not imputed where there is no law. Learn hence, That God having created man a rational creature, capable of moral government, is by immediate resultancy his King and Governor, and has ruled him from the beginning by a law; yet not barely by a law, but by a covenant with promises and threatenings annexed, rewarding him for his obedience, and punishing him for his rebellion.

14 Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression,—

The apostle had asserted, That sin was in the world before the written law of Moses; here he proves it thus: "Death, the wages of sin, did reign in the world, and had power over all mankind from Adam to Moses: therefore sin was in the world from Adam to Moses." By them that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, infants are generally understood; the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to them, else death could have no power over them. The argument runs thus: Death is a punishment of sin, but infants die who never sinned actually; therefore they die for Adam's sin. Sin brought mortality into their nature, and the wages of sin is death: they brought a sinful nature into the world with them, which God gave the Jews of old an intimation of, by appointing the sacrament of circumcision, signifying that infants brought something into the world with them, which was early to be cut off; he also signifies the same to us christians, by appointing the

ordinance of baptism for children, which he calls *the laver of regeneration*. Now a laver supposes uncleanness; what is pure needs no laver. Learn hence, That infants as soon as they live, have in them the seeds of death: sin is the seed of death, the principle of corruption. God doeth infants no wrong when they die; their death is of themselves, for they have the seeds of death in themselves. All death is the wages of sin, and therefore can be no injustice to the sinner. Thus *Death reigned from Adam to Moses*, yea, even to this day, and like an insatiable tyrant will continue to reign and slay universally, and beyond number, from the infant to the aged, from the dunghill to the throne, sparing neither age nor sex, neither great nor small, neither sacred nor profane.

—Adam,—who is the figure of him that was to come.

From hence to the end of the chapter, the apostle enters upon a comparison betwixt Adam and Christ, whom he here calls a figure or resemblance of him that was to come, that is, of Christ. As Adam was the root of sin and death to all his natural seed, so Christ is the root of holiness and life to all his spiritual seed. As by the first Adam, sin, and by sin, death, came upon all men; so by the second Adam righteousness came, and by righteousness life, on all believers. As the first Adam merited death, so the second Adam life for all his offspring: *Thus Adam was the figure of him that was to come.*

15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is by one man, Jesus Christ*, hath abounded unto many. 16 And not as *it was* by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. 17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

The apostle having noted the parity and resemblance between Christ and Adam in the foregoing verses; here he observes the disparity and difference betwixt them, and that in several advantageous particulars: 1. He compares the sin of Adam with the obedience of Christ, and shows that the

sin of the one was not so pernicious as the obedience of the other was beneficial; Christ's obedience being more powerful to justification and salvation, than Adam's sin was to death and condemnation: for if the transgression of Adam, who was but a mere man, was able to pull down death and wrath upon all his natural seed; then the obedience of Christ, who is God as well as man, will be much more available to procure pardon and life to all his spiritual seed. 2. There is a further observable difference betwixt Adam and Christ, as in respect of their persons, so in respect of their acts, and extent of their acts. Thus Adam by one act of sin brought death, that is, the sentence of death, upon the whole world, all mankind becoming subject to mortality for that one sin of his; but it is many sins, of many men, which Christ doth deliver from, in the free gift of our justification; absolving us not only from that one fault, but from all other faults, and offences whatsoever. Learn thence, That the obedience of Christ extends itself not only to the pardon of original sin in Adam, but to all personal and actual sins whatsoever. 3. The apostle shows the difference betwixt them two, that is, the first and second Adam, as in respect of the effects and consequences of their acts; if by means of one man, and by one offence of that man, the whole race of mankind became subject to death; then much more shall they who are redeemed and justified by Jesus Christ, be made partakers of everlasting life, wherein they shall reign with him in glory. From the whole, note, The infinite wisdom, transcendent grace, and rich mercy of God to a miserable world, in providing a salve as large as the sore, a remedy as extensive as the malady, a sovereign antidote in the blood of the second Adam, to expel the poison and malignity of the sin of the first Adam. O happy they! who having received from the first Adam corruption for corruption, have received from the second Adam grace for grace.

18 Therefore, as by the offence of one, *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Observe here, How the apostle informs us of a truth, which all the writings of philosophers never acquainted us with;

namely, the meritorious imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity; that all mankind sinned in Adam, and became obnoxious to death, and all other calamities and miseries as a punishment for their sin. Yea, the writings of Moses himself, though they declare to us the sin of Adam, and that his sin was punished with death; yet that by his disobedience all his race and posterity were involved, and became miserable, is a truth which we are peculiarly beholden to the gospel, and particularly to this text and context, for the more full discovery of. And the account of that matter seems to stand thus: the rebellion of the first man against the great Creator, was a sin of universal efficacy, that derives a guilt and stain to mankind in all ages of the world. And the account which the scripture gives of it is grounded on the relation which we have to Adam, as being the natural and moral principle of all mankind: as the whole race of mankind was virtually in Adam's loins, so it was presumed to give virtual consent to what he did. When he broke, all his posterity became bankrupts; there being a conspiracy of all the sons of Adam in that rebellion, and not one subject left in his obedience. Add to this, that Adam is to be considered as the moral as well as the natural principle of mankind. In the first covenant made betwixt God and him, Adam was considered, not as a single person, but as a *caput gentis*; and contracted not for himself only, but for all his descendants by ordinary generation: his person was the root and fountain of theirs, and his will the representative of theirs. From hence his numerous issue became a party in the covenant, and had a title to the benefits contained in it upon his obedience, and was liable to the curse upon his violation of it. Upon this ground it is, that the apostle here in this text and context institutes a parallel betwixt Adam and Christ: *That as by the disobedience of the former, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of the latter, many were made righteous.* As Christ in his death did not suffer as a private person, but as a surety and sponsor representing the whole church; in like manner, Adam in his disobedience was esteemed a public person, representing the whole race of mankind: and by a just law it was not restrained to himself, but is the sin of the common nature.

But adored, for ever adored, be the wisdom and goodness of Almighty God, in providing a remedy which bears proportion to the cause of our ruin, that as we fell in Adam our representative, so we are raised by Christ the head of our recovery;

which two persons are considered as causes of contrary effects! The effects are *sin and righteousness, condemnation and justification.* For as the disobedience of the first Adam is meritoriously imputed to all his natural posterity, and brings death upon all; so the righteousness of the second Adam is meritoriously imputed to all his spiritual progeny, to obtain life for them. As the carnal Adam, having lost original righteousness, derives a corrupt nature to all that descend from him; so the spiritual Adam, having by his obedience purchased grace for us, conveys a vital efficacy unto us. The same spirit of holiness which anointed our Redeemer, doth quicken all his race, that as they have borne the image of the earthly, they may bear the image of the heavenly Adam.

20 Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: 21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

The law entered that sin might abound: That is, before the law was written, we became obnoxious to death by one man's disobedience, without much sense of it; but after the law was given by Moses, sin did more clearly and conspicuously appear to be sin; its odiousness and ugliness was more manifest to the conscience of the sinner. As the sinner has abounded in sin, in a way of commission: so *sin* doth by the discovery of the law abound in the sinner's apprehension, in the sight and sense of it upon the conscience of the sinner. Nevertheless, *as sin abounds, grace doth much more abound.* As the exceeding sinfulness of sin is manifested by the law, so the superabounding grace and pardoning mercy of God is rendered gloriously conspicuous in and by the gospel; that as the power of sin appeared in making us liable to temporal and eternal death, so might the power of grace appear in beginning in us a spiritual life here, and bringing us to an eternal life in glory hereafter. In short, when the apostle says, *that the law entered, that sin might abound;* he doth not mean to make it abound, by encouraging the sinner to the commission of it, but by impressing the conviction of it upon the conscience of the sinner. A man without the law looks upon himself as a small sinner; but after he has viewed his sins in the glass of the law, he sees himself a great and a mountainous sinner: as a star which a child thinks to be no bigger than

a spark, but a man that views it through an instrument computes it to be bigger than the globe of the earth. Lord! help us to see our sins in the glass of thy law; yea, in the glass of thy Son's blood; and then we shall be sensible what an infinite and immense evil sin is; namely, the *stain* and *blemish* of our nature, the disease and deformity of our minds, the highest infelicity of the creature, and the boldest affront that can be given to the majesty of the great and glorious God. Learn from the whole, That the riches, the abounding riches, the superabounding riches of God's pardoning grace, are manifested in the remission of our sins, and in the justification of our persons: *As sin abounded, grace doth much more abound.* Now the superabounding riches of pardoning grace do thus shine forth: 1. In the nature of the mercy, which is the richest and sweetest of all mercies. No mercy sweeter than a pardon to a condemned sinner; no pardon like God's pardon to a sinner condemned at his bar. 2. In the peculiarity of the mercy. Remission is not a common, but a crowning favour; it never was, never shall be, extended to fallen angels; and it is to be feared that the far greater part of mankind refuse the terms and conditions upon which pardoning grace and mercy is offered and tendered to them. 3. In the method in which pardoning mercy is dispensed; namely, through the blood of Christ, that all-sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction; by which method God *has more commended his love to us*, than if he had pardoned us without a satisfaction; for then he had only displayed his mercy; but now he has declared his justice, yea, caused mercy and justice to meet and kiss each other, to meet and triumph together. 4. The superabounding riches of pardoning mercy appear in the latitude and extent of that act of grace. Lord, who can understand his errors! yet the blood of thy Son cleanseeth from all sin, small and great, secret and open, old and new, original and actual; all pardoned without exception. O how well might the Psalmist say, *With the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption!* Psal. cxxx. Lastly, the riches of pardoning grace do shine forth, as in the peculiarity, so in the perpetuity of remission. As grace pardons all sin without exception, so the pardons it bestows are without revocation; the pardoned soul shall never come into condemnation: *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us*, Psal. ciii. 10. As the east and the west are the two opposite points of heaven, which can never come together; so neither

shall the pardoned sinner and his sins ever meet any more. God is said to *cast them behind his back*; that is, he will never behold them more, so as to charge them upon the pardoned sinner, in order to his condemnation. May our faith then, both in life and death, triumph in the assurance of this blessed truth. That where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; and as sin hath reigned unto death, even so hath grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives for ever in heaven, to apply, by his prevailing intercession, what he impetrated and obtained for us here on earth by his meritorious satisfaction. To this Jesus, who is the faithful Witness, and first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAP. VI.

The design and scope of our apostle, in this chapter, is to show, that the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ Jesus, which he had so strenuously asserted in the foregoing chapters, is so far from being a doctrine leading to licentiousness, that it greatly tendeth to promote holiness; and obligeth all the professors of Christianity to the greatest strictness in conversation, answerable to the dignity and obligations of their Christian name.

WHAT shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

The apostle begins this chapter with an objection which some licentious persons might be ready to make against what he had delivered in the close of the foregoing chapter; namely, that where sin abounded, pardoning grace and mercy did much more abound. If, say they, the riches of grace be thus manifested in the pardon of sin, let us then take the more liberty to sin, because grace so exceedingly abounds in the pardon of it. The apostle rejects such an inference with the greatest detestation and abhorrence, saying, *God forbid, &c.* As if he had said, "O vile abuse of the most excellent thing in the world! What, did Christ shed his blood to expiate our guilt, and shall we make that a plea to extenuate our guilt? *God forbid!* Surely there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared, not that he may be the more abused." In the words observe, 1. An objection supposed, as if the doctrine of the gospel did countenance licentiousness, and encourage any to sin, or to continue in sin. 2. Ob-

serve with what abhorrency and indignation such a doctrine and proposition is rejected by our apostle: What! shall we continue in sin, because pardoning mercy doth abound! *God forbid* that such a direct blasphemy against the holy doctrine of our Saviour should be maintained by any professor. Observe, 3. The confutation which he gives of this bold and impudent assertion: *How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?* dead to sin; that is, by our baptismal engagement, vow, and obligation: every christian, at his first entrance upon the profession of christianity, does take upon himself a vow of solemn obligation to die to sin, and to live no longer therein. From the whole learn, That to take any encouragement to live in sin, from the consideration of God's rich mercy and free grace toward sinners, is an absurd, abominable, and blasphemous impiety, contrary to all ingenuity, gratitude, and love, both to God the father, and our Lord Jesus Christ his Son.

8 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

To be baptized into Christ, is by baptism to take the name of Christ upon us, to be incorporated, ingrafted, and implanted into the church of Christ, being made visible members of his mystical body by baptism. *To be baptized into Christ's death*, imports our being conformed to him in the likeness of his death: our being engaged to die unto sin, as Christ died for sin. Learn hence, that the death of Christ was a lively representation of the death of sin; and believers are to imitate his death in their dying daily unto sin. Did Christ die for us a painful, shameful, and accursed death? such a death must sin die in us. Was his death for sin free and voluntary? so must we die to sin. Was his death an universal crucifixion; did no life, sense, or motion, remain with him? thus must we imitate the likeness of his death, by an universal mortification of every known sin, which occasioned his dying. In a word, Did Christ die and rise again, never to die more? so must we die unto sin, and walk in newness of life. How shall we that are dead unto sin, live any longer therein?—Thus it appears the indispensable duty of all Christians to transcribe the copy of Christ's death in their hearts and lives.

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so

we also should walk in newness of life.

To urge Christians to farther measures and degrees of mortification of sin, and living unto holiness, the apostle uses here a double argument; one from our baptism, the other from the resurrection of Christ. Observe, 1. The argument to move us to die unto sin, drawn from our baptism: *We are buried with him by baptism unto death.* The apostle alludes, no doubt, to the ancient manner and way of baptizing persons in those hot countries, which was by immersion, or putting them under water for a time, and then raising them up again out of the water; which rite had also a mystical signification, representing the burial of our old man, sin in us, and our resurrection to newness of life. Learn hence, That the ordinance of baptism lays every baptized person under the strongest engagements and highest obligations to die unto sin; and walk in newness of life. The metaphors of burying and rising again, do imply and intimate thus much: burial implies a continuing unto death; thus is mortification a continued act, a daily dying unto sin; and rising again supposes a person never more to be under the power of death. Observe, 2. Another forcible argument to encourage us to die to sin, and walk in newness of life, is drawn from the resurrection of Christ: *As he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so should we also walk in newness of life.* Here note, 1. The proposal of a pattern and exemplar to us: *Christ was raised from the dead.* 2. The author and efficient cause of Christ's resurrection: *He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father*; that is, by the glorious power of the Father, yet not without his own power as God. So Christ told the Jews, John ii. *Destroy this temple of my body, and in three days I will raise it up again.* Note, 2. The conformity or similitude on our part: as Christ arose, so should we arise out of the grave of sin, and walk in newness of life. Learn hence, that Christ's resurrection is a powerful motive, and lays a Christian under strong obligations and engagements, to arise from sin, and walk in newness of life. Christ's resurrection is both a pattern and a pledge of our resurrection: a pattern after which we are to conform in our rising from the grave of sin. Did Christ rise early and speedily? so should we: he arose early in the morning of the day, so should we in the morning of our youth; he rose voluntarily and cheerfully, so should we, rejoicing at our spiritual liberty and freedom from sin's

bondage and thralldom; he rose with a resurrection never to die more, so should we arise with desires and endeavours, that spiritual death may never more have dominion over us. And if Christ's resurrection be thus a pattern of our resurrection now, it will be a pledge of a blessed resurrection at the last day. Observe lastly, The duty which every baptized person lies under an obligation to perform, in conformity to Christ, into whose death they are baptized; and that is, *to walk in newness of life*. Where note, for our encouragement, The account which the scripture gives of the properties of the new life, which such as are buried and risen with Christ do assuredly live; and here we find it is the most noble life, the most delectable life, the most profitable life, the most holy and heavenly life; holy in its principle and motive, holy in its aim and end, holy in its rule and actings. In a word, newness of life is a preparation for, and an introduction into, eternal life; and must needs be the most excellent life, for it is a life from God, it is a life laid out for God, yea, it is a life which God himself lives; and none must expect to live with him in heaven hereafter, that do not walk in newness of life here, but if we have our fruit unto holiness, our end will be everlasting life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his resurrection*.

Observe here, 1. A supposition: *if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death*: namely, by dying unto sin. If as Christ died, we die; he a natural death, we a spiritual death; he for sin, and we to sin; he by way of expiation, suffering, and satisfying for sin; we by way of mortification, killing, and crucifying of sin. Learn thence, That all baptized persons ought to labour for, and endeavour after, a conformity to the death of Christ, in their dying daily unto sin. As he died a painful and shameful death for us, such a death should sin die in us; living a dying life, and dying a lingering but a certain death. Observe, 2. The apostle's inference drawn from the foregoing supposition: *If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection*; that is, we are under an obligation to imitate his resurrection, by rising from the death of sin unto newness of life. Did he rise early out of his natural grave? so must we out of our spiritual. Did he arise to a new life? so must we arise and walk in newness of life. Did he arise never to die

more! so must we that are dead to sin live no longer therein. Observe, 3. How the power enabling us thus to die unto sin, and to live unto holiness, is derived from Christ by virtue of our implantation into him by faith; *If we have been planted together, &c.* As the graft liveth, groweth, and fructifieth, by the juice drawn from the stock into which it is planted; so Christians being taken out of the old rotten stock, degenerate Adam, and planted into the noble stock, Christ Jesus, are, by a virtue derived from him, raised to newness of life into whom they were ingrafted. Learn hence, that we experience the power of Christ's death and resurrection, in enabling us to die to sin, and live unto God, only by virtue of a real implantation into Christ, by an apposite and lively faith. *If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.*

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

By the *old man*, we are to understand our corrupt and depraved nature, so called, because it is as old as Adam, and derived from Adam, born and bred with us. This old man, or our corrupt and vicious nature, must be crucified, to show our conformity and likeness to Christ in his crucifixion. The cross bringeth pain, shame, and death; the like must sin undergo in the work of mortification. By the *body of sin*, we are to understand the whole stock and mass of corruption, compacted as it were into one monstrous body, prepared with all its members to commit actual sins. Called a *body*, because composed of many sinful passions and lusts, as the body is of many members, and also because they are executed by the body. And farther, because sin has as real a subsistence in us, as if it were a body; not that sin is a substance, but the depravity of a substance. Now this body of sin must be *destroyed*, not as to actions only, but as to the affections and inclinations also; 'tis not enough that we scratch this old man's face, but we must stab his heart, in desire, in purpose, in endeavours: we must seek the death and destruction of all sin, *that henceforth we may not serve sin*; that is, that henceforward we should renounce the service of, and all relation to sin. Where note, 1. That before regeneration we are all servants of, yea, slaves to sin; so many lusts, so many lords reigning in us, and tyrannizing over us. Note, 2. That it is one thing to sin, and another thing to serve

sin. To serve sin is to yield willing obedience, to indulge ourselves in any presumptuous act or course of sin. 'Tis not the presence, but prevalency of sins that destroys and damns the sinner; 'tis not the flesh being in us, but our being in the flesh, that displeaseth God. O! happy for us if sin's dominion be taken away, though its life be prolonged for a season.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

He that is dead, that is, spiritually dead unto sin, in conformity to the death of Christ, *is freed from sin*; that is, not only from the guilt, but from the dominion and slavery of sin. Learn hence, That freedom from the bondage and tyranny, from the dominion and slavery, of sin, is the privilege of all those that are crucified with Christ, and dead to sin. Freedom from sin consists in two things: 1. In dispossessing the soul of every evil habit and disposition. 2. In renouncing a sinful course of life and conversation. If sin be weakened in the heart, the fruit of that will appear in the life. The strength of sin lies in the love of sin; if that be broken, the power of sin is shaken.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.

Observe here, 1. A supposition, or pre-supposed condition; the thing supposed, is the baptized person's being dead with Christ; *If we be dead with him*, that is, by the exercise of daily mortification. If we have fellowship and communion with him in his death, that as he died for sin, we die daily unto sin: then followeth, 2. The inference or conclusion, *We shall also live with him*: that is, we that have had fellowship with him in his death, shall have communion with him in his resurrection: we shall live with him a life of grace and glory, of regeneration, and glorification, the one to newness of life, the other to everlasting life. Hence learn, that all those that are dead with Christ have no reason to doubt but that they shall also live with him. But who are the persons that may be said to be dead with Christ? *Answer*, 1. All such as own the obligation which their baptismal vow and Christian profession puts upon them, and solemnly lays them under; namely, to keep the whole gospel, even as they who were circumcised were obliged to keep the whole law. 2. Such as make conscience of it, daily endeavour to perform it; and obtain the success of their endeavours in such a degree, that the reign of sin is broken,

though sin itself be not totally destroyed. These may be said to be dead and crucified with Christ, having by the assistance of his Spirit, in some measure, crucified the flesh with its inordinate affections and lusts; and as they here live like him, so they shall also live with him; *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.*

9 Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

Here the apostle declares both the death which Christ once died, and the life which he now liveth. Observe, 1. The death which Christ died, *He died unto sin once*; that is, either, 1. He died for sin once, namely, to expiate the guilt of sin, and to make atonement for sinners; or else, 2. He died unto sin; that is, to destroy, to conquer, and subdue sin in the hearts and lives of his children and people, by the aids and assistances of his Holy Spirit. Observe, 2. The life which Christ now lives after his resurrection: he liveth unto God, and dieth no more. Here note, The perpetuity and immortality of his life, *he dieth no more*. Christ has done his work, in taking away the guilt and power of sin; let us look to it, that we do ours. Note, 2. The perfection and blessedness of his life; *he liveth unto God*, or liveth for ever with God; by which phrase is expressed that eternal and indissoluble union which the Son hath with the Father; he is one with him, and lives for ever in the enjoyment of him. Learn hence, That the due consideration of Christ's resurrection from the dead, will mightily promote the spiritual life in us. This it doth these three ways: 1. As it evidences the truth and verity of the Christian religion, that Christ was no impostor or deceiver. In the judgment of the world, Christ died as a malefactor; but God justified him, acquitted and freed him from that imputation, by raising him from the dead. 2. Christ's resurrection shows the perfection of his sacrifice and satisfaction, that nothing more is needful to take away sin; when the surety is let out of prison, the debtor may be assured that his debt is paid. 3. Christ's arising is a pledge and assurance of our resurrection, and so promotes holiness in us by obliging us to live as the candidates of heaven, as the children of the resurrection, as becomes the heirs of such glorious hopes.

11 Likewise reckon ye also your-

selves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here we have two parts of our sanctification described, namely, mortification and vivification, dying unto sin, and living unto God. 1. Mortification, or dying unto sin, *Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin*; that is, look upon the death of Christ, and your death with Christ, as a strong argument against the reign and power of sin; account yourselves dead unto sin. Now deadness argues three things; 1. Disability. Such as are dead are disabled for working. Proportionable to the measure of our death unto sin, will be our disability to fulfil the lusts of it. Sin in a regenerate man is no more able to do all its will, than a crucified man is able to do what he will; 1 John iii. 9, *He that is born of God cannot commit sin*; not as others do, and as himself formerly has done. 2. Deadness to sin argues disaffection towards sin, as well as disability: when we die to sin, our love to sin dieth. 3. Deadness argues liberty and unsubjectedness: he that is dead is freed from sin, as the woman by death is freed from her husband; and the Christian that is dead with Christ unto sin, *stands fast in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free*. Observe, 2. The other part of our sanctification here declared: and that is, living unto God. This likewise consists in three things: 1. In having our sensitive appetites in subjection, and under the subjection and dominion of reason; when we are governed like men, by reason and conscience, not like beasts, by sense and sensual inclination. 2. In having reason illuminated by faith, guided and directed by divine revelation. And, 3. when this faith inclines and enables us to live unto God; when faith begets in us a resolution to obey God, and to persevere in our duty to him. This is to be dead unto sin, and alive unto God. Observe lastly, Christians are said to be dead unto sin, and alive unto God, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*. Which phrase imports, that Christ is the root and principle of our spiritual life by faith, in whom we are enabled to live unto God: as the scion, ingrafted into the stock, lives by the juice and nourishment it receives from the stock; so Christians are alive unto God, in, by, and through Jesus Christ, receiving from him that virtue whereby their spiritual life is begun, carried on, and maintained, and shall in due time be perfected and completed. From whence we learn, that Christ is not only an head of authority, but an head of influence, to his church and members; *He strengthening them, they can do all*

things, but without him they can do nothing: that is, without an interest in him, and an influence of grace derived from him.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body. that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof,

Observe here, The duty which the apostle exhorts the Christians to; and that is, to prevent the regency and dominion of sin: *Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies*. But when is sin said to reign? *Answer*, When the bent and tendency of the heart is toward sin, and all the faculties of the soul are on sin's side, and wholly take its part; when sin is not opposed, or but slightly opposed; when sin is committed industriously, and temptations to sin prevail easily; when persons sin without any sense of sin, with small remorse and check for sin; then sin is in its throne, and reigns imperiously. But why doth the apostle say, Let not sin reign in your body, rather than in your soul? *Answer*, Because sin and lusts do gratify the body exceedingly; that is, the sensual appetite, the brutish part of man: and further, because they are acted and executed by the body or outward man, called therefore *the deeds of the body*. But why doth the apostle here call it a mortal body? *Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies*. *Answer*, 1. To put us in mind that the mortality of our bodies is the fruit and punishment of our sins; that sin having brought in death upon us, our bodies must die for sin. 2. To show the vanity and transitoriness of the delights and pleasures of sin, which do gratify a mortal body, which, after all its pamperings, must perish. 3. The apostle may probably call it a mortal body, to show that our conflict with sin shall endure but a little while: ere long this mortal shall put on immortality. It may encourage to be violent in the conflict; ere long we shall be victorious in the conquest. From the whole, note, 1. That sin is a great and mighty king, which has a regal power over the enslaved sinner. Sin has the love of an husband, the power of a king, and the worship of God, in the sinner's heart. Sin, as a raging and commanding king, has the sinner's heart for its throne, the members of the body for its service, the world, the flesh, and the devil, for its grand council, lusts and temptation for its weapons and armour; and its chief fortifications are ignorance and sensuality, and fleshly reasonings. O deplorable degradation, that man, who was created God's subject, is, by his shameful apostasy, become the vassal and slave of sin and Satan. *Learn, 2.*

That all baptized persons, who are dead with Christ unto sin, are strongly obliged to take care that sin reigns not in them, nor gets any dominion over them, by the desires and interests of this mortal body. And the obligations which Christianity lays upon us not to suffer sin to reign over us, are many and great; namely, the precepts, promises, and threatenings of the gospel, the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the sense of baptismal and sacramental engagements. Happy we! if by the help of these sin is dethroned, its empire dissolved, and it no longer reigns in our mortal bodies, *that we should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

As if the apostle had said, "Sin, which has such a kingly and commanding power, will be calling upon you to give up the members of your bodies, and the faculties of your souls, as instruments or weapons for its service: but yield not your consent thereto, turn a deaf ear to the voice of sin, and hearken to the call of God, who commands you to yield yourselves unto him, and your members as instruments for his service." Here note, 1. A negative exhortation, *Yield not your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.* Let not sin or Satan have an eye, an ear, a tongue, a foot, a hand, nay, not so much as a little finger devoted to their service, how strongly soever they may solicit and move for it. Note, 2. A positive injunction, *But yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* Learn hence, That Christians ought not to suffer any members of their body to be employed in the service of sin, but to yield them all up unto God, in obedience to his will. Here are two opposite masters, God and sin; the one a tyrant and usurper, the other a rightful lord and master. And here also are two opposite employments: unrighteousness, by which is meant all sin, whereby we deal unrighteously with God, our neighbour, and ourselves; and righteousness, whereby we give to God, to others, and ourselves, their respective dues. Now the apostle calls loudly upon us to render unto God the things that are God's; to yield every member of the body to him, and employ it for him; for the members of the body were all created by him, and redeemed for him, and shall be glorified with him. O let us then take heed of abusing any members

of our body; let us not employ so much as a little finger or hair of our heads in the service of sin: for it is the Lord's: And let every one take heed of dishonouring God with his bodily members, lest he provoke God to deny him the comfortable use of the members of his body. When Jeroboam stretched out his hand against the prophet of God, he presently lost the use of his hand. O! how suddenly can God wither an hand or an arm, that is stretched out to do mischief! 'Tis a righteous thing for God to smite an abused eye with blindness, an abused ear with deafness, an abused foot with lameness, a swearing or forswearing tongue with paralytic deadness. Lord, how justly mayest thou recal thy favours, when we fight against thee with them! *Yielding the members of our bodies as weapons of unrighteousness unto sin!*

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Our apostle having in the foregoing verses exhorted them to take care that sin get not any dominion over them by obeying its motions, yielding to its inclinations, and employing the faculties of the soul, and any of the members of the body, in the service of sin; in this verse he gives them an encouraging promise, that though sin may rebel, yet it shall reign no more in a regenerate person: and that if they did pray and watch against it, strive and contend with it, though it would have a being and existence in them, yet it should not have a regency and dominion over them; because they were not under the law or covenant of works, which gave the knowledge of sin, and required exact and perfect obedience, but gave no strength to perform it; but under grace, under a gospel covenant, which administers strength to resist sin, and to overcome it: *Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* Here observe, 1. The privilege of every regenerate and gracious person: *Sin shall not have dominion over him.* Learn hence, That sin should not, and shall not, reign over those who are in a state of grace, and under the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit of Christ; *de jure*, it should not; *de facto*, it shall not reign. Sin shall not reign in us, nor have dominion over us: 1. Because of the mischievous influences of it, both with reference to God, and in relation to ourselves; it plucks the sceptre out of God's hands, and puts it into Satan's. The throne of the heart is never empty; 'tis the design of sin to dethrone God, and set up itself. And not less mischievous is sin to our

selves, for its servitude is base and burdensome, painful and shameful: the devil is a sure, but a sad paymaster; he plagues them most who have done him most service. 2. Because of the unsuitableness of sin to our renewed state, we are not our own, but Christ's; his by purchase, his by conquest, his by covenant. Now if after such engagements we suffer sin to reign and have dominion over us, we rescind our baptismal vow ratified by our personal consent. 3. The reason of the foregoing privilege, why sin shall not have dominion over us, because *we are not under the law, but under grace.* *Question, 1.* But are not believers now under the law, though they live under the gospel? *Answer,* Yes: they are under the rule and direction of the law, but not under the curse and malediction of the law; they are not under the law as a covenant of life, but they are under it as an eternal rule of living. The law of God now binds the believer to the observation of it, as strictly as it did Adam in paradise; but upon the unwilling violation of it he doth not incur the curse, Christ having redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us. *Question, 2.* But were not those that lived under the law of old, in a sort, under grace as well as we? *Answer,* Yes: they were, but not in the same degree; good men then had help and assistance in the course of holiness and obedience, when they lived under the law; but they had it not by the law, but by the gospel, which was preached to them as well as unto us, *Heb. iv. 2.* This administers strength to subdue sin, and the power to overcome it. Learn hence, that the gospel is a manifestation of the Spirit, and furnishes believers with sufficient helps against the power of sin, and with well grounded hopes of obtaining victory over it. The grace of the gospel gives hopes of victory over sin several ways: 1. Because it was the end of Christ's death to slay sin. 2. Because of the new nature put into us, which is to help us against sin. 3. By assuring us of the Spirit's help, which is to assist us in the mortifying and subduing of sin; it is through the Spirit's operation that we begin, carry on, and accomplish the work of mortification. 4. Because the gospel furnishes us with promises, and thereby gives us assurance of success. So then, if from all these encouragements we bid a confident defiance unto, and make a courageous resistance against sin, it shall never have a final and full dominion over us, because *we are not under the law, but under grace.*

15 What then? shall we sin, be-

cause we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Here the apostle starts an objection which some licentious persons might be ready to make: "If we are not under the law which condemns sin, but under the covenant of grace, which allows the pardon and promises the forgiveness of sin, why may we not then go on in sin, and continue in sin forbidden by the law, seeing we are not under the law?" The apostle rejects such a suggestion with his usual note of detestation, God forbid. From hence we may learn, That it is 'an high abuse of the covenant of grace, to suppose or imagine that it countenances any licentiousness, or allows any liberty to sin. The design of the new covenant is to recover from sin, not to encourage any to continue in sin. Learn, 2. That such doctrine and inferences are to be abhorred, which from the grace of God, in mitigating the law, would infer an utter abrogation of the law, denying that it hath a directive regulating power over a believer. True, we are delivered from the curse and condemnatory sentence of the law, from the severity and rigorous exactions of the law; but to refuse obedience to the law, under pretence of christian liberty; to sin because we are not under the law, but under grace; is a turning the grace of God into wantonness, and to use our christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh.

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.

Two things are here intimated by the apostle: 1. That all men really are and ought to be reputed servants to that master whose works they do and whose commands they obey: *Whom ye obey, his servants ye are.* Learn thence, That we may infallibly know whose servants we are, and what master we serve, Christ or Satan, by examining and enquiring whose commands they are which we execute and obey. 2. The apostle intimates, that every person or servant shall receive a reward suitable to the master he serves, and proportionable to the work he does. If Satan be our master, sin is our work, and death our wages; if we be the servants of God, obedience is our work, and eternal life will be our reward; *there is a reward for the righteous, and wages for the workers of iniquity.* The devil's drudges shall have full pay, but no content; the wages of sin

is death: there's pay, such as it is, woe-ful pay, a black penny! God's servants, though they do not work for wages, yet they shall not work for nothing: *Verily there is a reward for the righteous*: A reward of mercy, not of merit; a reward of grace, not of debt; and accordingly the apostle says here, *His servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness*. But why doth he not say, of obedience unto life, as well as of sin unto death? then the antithesis had been more plain and full. *Answer*, Because though sin be the cause of death, yet obedience is not the cause of life, but only the way to it. *Via ad regnum, non causa regnandi*.

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin: but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

We must not understand these words, as if the apostle had blessed God because they were once slaves to sin and Satan; but thanks God that the time of that bondage was past and over. As if he had said, "God be thanked, that though formerly ye were the servants of sin, yet since your conversion you are become obedient to the precepts of christianity, having obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine, or, (according to the original,) being cast into the mould of that doctrine, which was delivered to you." Learn hence, That to be turned from the service of sin to the sincere obedience of the gospel, is a mercy that we can never be sufficiently sensible of, and bless God for. God be thanked, that although ye were the servants of sin, ye are no longer so. Learn, 2. That the doctrine of the gospel has a divine efficacy attending and accompanying it on the hearts of believers; it has a transforming power to change and fashion men's minds into the likeness of it, as the mould doth the metal that is cast into it. The doctrine of the gospel is the mould, and the heart is the metal, which, when melted and cast into the mould, receives its form and figure. O happy they: who having all their days sat under the dispensation of the gospel, are able at last to say, We are transformed and changed into the same image from glory to glory by the spirit of the Lord.

18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. 19 I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh; for as ye have yielded your members servants to unclean-

ness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

Our apostle goes on to put the Romans in mind of their past state by nature, and of their present state by grace; they were once the servants of sin, but now free from sin, and made by Christ servants of righteousness. All believers are made free by Christ for service, not one free from serving; to be free to serve, is infinitely better than to be free from service; such as are by Christ freed from sinful servitude, are best fitted for and most obliged to spiritual service. Learn hence, That such as are recovered from sin to God, should show the reality of their change, by being as zealous in the ways of holiness, as before they were earnest in the ways of sin. Shall we not do as much for God, as for sin and Satan? Is not he a better master, his work better service, and his wages a better reward? Lord, shall we not with as much zeal and vigour serve thee, as ever we served our lusts, those imperious exactors of our time and strength? O, had we the faculties and powers of angels, yet would our service for thee fall infinitely short of our obligations to thee. Observe next, how the apostle doth not barely urge the necessity of serving Christ in our regenerate state, but does enforce the proportion which our service now ought to bear to the disservice formerly done in our carnal state: *As ye have yielded your members servants to unquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness*. Observe lastly, The great dignation and gracious condescension of Christ, that he should accept those members of ours as instruments of his service, which have been employed in the devil's service. "O blessed Jesus! wilt thou come into that vile heart of mine, which was once the seat of Satan, where he has ruled, and every unclean lust been harboured? O holy Spirit! shall that body be thy temple to dwell in now, which has been so often defiled with lust and vomit heretofore? Shall that tongue ever praise him in heaven, which has blasphemed him by oaths and horrid imprecations here on earth? One would have expected that Christ should rather have said, "Vile wretch! Satan has had the use and service of thy body, and all its members, from thy childhood and youth unto this day; thy will has been his throne, thy memory his storehouse, and all thy members his tools and instruments to sin against me; thou didst indeed dedicate all these to my service and glory in thy baptism, but thou hast employed all these in Satan's service

for many years past. However, if now thou art willing to yield those very members unto righteousness and to holiness, which formerly were servants unto uncleanness, I will both accept them, and reward thee for them."

20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

That is, you were free *de facto*, not *de jure*; when you were sin's servants, you were void of righteousness, *that* had no part of your service then; therefore sin should not have one jot of your service now. As righteousness had no part of your service in your carnal state, so there is no reason why sin should have any service from you in your gracious state. Learn, that such sinners as are now become servants to God, ought to be as free from sin as before they were free from righteousness: it will evidently appear so, if we consider the great and good Master which we serve, the nature of our present work, and certainty and transcendency of our future reward, the obligations we lie under as creatures, as new creatures, by the law of creation, by the favour of redemption, by the promises and hopes of glorification; all this should engage us to the love and practice of universal holiness.

21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

Here the apostle puts them in mind of the several mischiefs and inconveniences which did attend their former vicious course of life; namely, unprofitableness; *What fruit had you? Dishonourableness: whereof ye are now ashamed.* Perniciousness: *the end of those things is death.* Behold the complexion of sin's face in this glass; it being for the time past unprofitable, for the time present shameful, for the time to come deadly; most men consult their profit, their honour, their pleasure, their safety, but sin disappoints us in them all. Observe, 1. The unprofitableness of sin for time past: *What fruit had ye then?* Are ye any thing the better for it? Verily, not at all; there is no solid benefit, no real profit to be got by sin; those sins which we think to be advantageous to us, when all accounts are cast up, will be found to be quite otherwise; all the gain of sin will turn to loss at last. Observe, 2. The dishonourableness and disparagement which sin brings along with it at present: *Whereof ye are now ashamed.* Learn thence, That sin is really matter of shame and blushing, rendering us odious to God, infamous to others, loathsome to ourselves; it is a dis-

honour to our natures, a reproach to our reason and understanding; it doth therefore debase and degrade us, because it pollutes and defiles us, and is a reproach which we voluntarily bring upon ourselves. Observe, 3. The perniciousness of sin, or the fatal consequence of it. *The end of those things is death*; natural, spiritual, and eternal. The latter is principally meant, which consists in lively apprehensions of the happiness invaluable which they have lost, and in a quick sense of the pains intolerable which they lie under, and this accompanied with despair of all future relief. Now when misery and despair meet together, they make a man completely miserable. Good God! make sinners, all sinners, thoroughly sensible of the manifest inconveniences of a wicked life; that it brings no present profit or advantage to them, that it will not bear reflection, but causeth shame, and that it is fatal in its event and issue! O then, let no profit tempt us, no pleasure entice us, no power embolden us, no privacy encourage us, to enter into any sinful way, or adventure upon any wicked work; for what fruit can we expect to have of those things whereof we are now ashamed, the end of which things is death?

22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

As the former verse represented to us the manifold inconveniences of a wicked life, so this verse acquaints us with the manifold advantages of a holy and religious course of life; and this first, as to the present benefit and advantage of it, *Ye have your fruit unto holiness.* 2ndly, In respect of the future reward of it, *And the end everlasting life.* Here observe, 1. The description which the apostle makes of the change from a state of sin to a state of holiness: *Ye are made free from sin, and become the servants of God*: intimating, that a state of sin is a state of servitude and slavery; and indeed it is the vilest and hardest slavery in the world, it being the slavery of the soul, which is the best and noblest part of ourselves; 'tis the subjection of our reason to our sensual appetites and brutish passions; which is as uncomely a sight as to see beggars ride on horseback, and princes walk on foot. Farther, 'tis a voluntary slavery; the sinner chooseth his servitude, and willingly puts his neck under this yoke. Again, the sinner makes himself a slave to his own servants, to those who were born to be subject to him, I mean his own appetites and

passions, choosing rather a life of sense, and to gratify his lusts, than to obey his reason. Observe, 2. The present benefit of an holy and religious life: *Ye have your fruit unto holiness.* What fruit? *Ana.* Inward peace and contentment of mind at present, length of days, health and prosperity in this world, solid joy and comfort at the hour of death, a good name and reputation among men after death; and it derives a blessing upon our posterity which we leave behind us. Observe, 3. The future reward and recompence of an holy life in the world to come: *The end everlasting life.* By which the apostle expresses both the happiness of our future state, and the ways and means by which we are prepared and made meet to be partakers of it. 1. The happiness of our future state is expressed by the name of everlasting life, which imports both the excellency of this state, it is a state of life; and the eternity, or endless duration of it, it is a state of everlasting life. 2. The way and means by which we are prepared and made meet to be partakers of this happiness; and that is, by the constant and sincere endeavours of a holy and good life; holiness in this life is the certain way, yea, the only way, to happiness in the life to come. This appears from the will of God, who has connected the end and the means together; from the justice of God, who will reward every man according to his work; and from the indecency and unsuitableness of the contrary. Without meetness and fitness for heaven, there could be no happiness in heaven; heaven would not be a paradise, but a purgatory; not a place of happiness, but of the greatest uneasiness, to a wicked man; therefore let us have *our present fruit unto holiness, that our end may be everlasting life.*

—23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The apostle having all along throughout this chapter exhorted us to die daily unto sin, and to live unto God, concludes with a motive drawn from the different rewards and punishments in another world: eternal death will be the punishment of sin and sinners, and eternal life the reward of holiness and holy persons. Observe, 1. The punishment of sin and sinners: *The wages of sin is death.* Where note, The offence committed, *sin*; the punishment inflicted, *death*; the justice and proportion between the sin and the punishment, it is a stipend or *wages*, a metaphor taken from soldiers, who at the end of their service receive their pay and stipend. Learn

hence, That death is the punishment of sin, is *finis operis*, though not *operantis*; the end of the work, though not the end of the worker. *Question*, What death is that which is the punishment of sin? *Ana.* Both temporal and eternal: the former consists in the separation of the soul from the body, the latter in an everlasting separation of soul and body from the presence of God, and in an imprisonment with devils and damned spirits to all eternity. *Quest.* What sin is that which is punished with death? *Ana.* Consider sin in its demerit and desert, and so death is the punishment of every sin; consider it in its issue and event, and so it is the punishment only of that sin which is aggravated with impenitency: all sins are venial with respect to the mercy of God, and the repentance of a sinner; but the wages of every sin that reigns in us, and is not forsaken by us, is eternal death. Observe, 2. The reward promised to holiness, and ensured to holy persons: *The gift of God is eternal life.* Here note, The happiness of holy persons: 1. In the Lord or Master whom they serve, God or Christ Jesus. 2. Happy in the reward of their services, eternal life. 3. Happy in the manner of their reward, it is a *free gift*, not wages; a metaphor taken from kings, who bestow upon such soldiers as have signalized themselves, over and above their stipend, coronets and laurels, as badges of their favour; unto which our apostle alludes, calling eternal life a donative, a freely dispensed favour: which may be considered in our eternal destination thereunto before all time; in our conversion and sanctification in time, which we may call the embryo of eternal life; and in our coronation and glorification, when at the end of time full possession of eternal life shall be given to us. In all which instances heaven appears to be a free gift, not procured by any merit of ours, but by the mediation of Christ our Lord: *The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

CHAP. VII.

The apostle having, in the foregoing chapter, declared how believers are freed from the power and dominion of sin, he proceeds in this chapter to declare, that they also are freed from the yoke of the Mosaic law, that being dead to them, and they to it; and the apostle's argument runs thus: Dead men are not held under the law, but they are freed and delivered from it. But as many as truly believe in Christ are dead to the law, and are therefore freed and delivered from it; that is, from the rigorous exactions of the law, and from the curse and malediction of the law: not from the guidance and direction of it, as a rule of life.

KNOW ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the

law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

As if the apostle had said, "You Jews, who study the law, and are well acquainted with it, cannot but know that the law of God hath power over a man, to require of him exact, perfect, and perpetual obedience, and to accuse, condemn, and bind him over to the curse, for the least breach and violation of it; and all this as long as he liveth under the law, and is not freed from the malediction of it by faith in Christ." Learn hence, 1. That the law of God, in the force and strength of it, and as considered in itself, is a very hard lord and master, exacting perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience to its commands, and binding sinners over to the curse for the least transgression and violation of it. Learn, 2. That Jesus Christ has freed all believers from the rigour of the law, from the curse of the law, from the irritation of the law; that is, from the power which is in the law, to stir them up to sin through the corruption of their own hearts and natures. Blessed be God! we are by Christ freed from and dead to the law, as a covenant of life; but we are under it, and may we all our days sit under the shadow of it with great delight, as an eternal rule of *holy living*.

2 For the woman which hath an husband, is bound by the law to *her* husband, so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of the husband. 3 So then, if while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye are also become dead to the law, by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Here the apostle doth exemplify and illustrate the foregoing assertion, namely, that believers are freed from the law, by a similitude taken from the law of marriage. As death freeth husband and wife from the law which bound them to each other, and empowereth the survivor to marry to another person; in like manner the death of Christ was the death of the law, as a covenant of works, holding us under the bond

of the curse of it; and so his dying gave us a manumission freedom from that bond, and a capacity of espousal unto Christ; that so living in conjugal affection and obedience to him, we may be made fruitful by his Spirit, doing such things as are agreeable to the will of God, and tending to the glory of God. *Ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ*; that is, through the offering up of Christ's body upon the cross. Learn hence, 1. That he that is under the law, is as strictly bound to the rigour and curse of the law, as a married woman is bound to her husband during his life. Learn, 2. That one great end of Christ's death was to purchase our freedom from the law, that we might be capable of being espoused to himself. For whilst we were under the curse of the law, we were not in a capacity of being married unto Christ. He or she that is a slave to another, is not capable to be disposed of in marriage until made free. In like manner we were in bondage to the law, as well as in slavery unto sin and Satan; but Christ has bought out our liberty, and thereby put us into a capacity of being espoused unto himself. Behold what manner of love the Redeemer has showed unto us, that we should be called his spouse, and he our husband! He loved us, but not for any advantage he could have by us; for we had nothing but sin and shame to present him with. Nay, he must purchase us, and that with his own blood, before he could be united to us. O incomparable love! O fervent desires! Learn, 3. That though believers are free from the rigour and curse of the law by the death of Christ, yet have they not an undoubted liberty, but are still under government, under an head and guide. As a wife is under the government of her husband, so are believers under the guidance and government of Jesus Christ, who in a special manner guideth them by his word and Spirit; and their being said to be dead to the law, signifies no more than the law's not having dominion over them, in regard of the curse and condemnation of it.

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death. 6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

As if the apostle had said, "When we

lived under the dispensation of the law, and were married to the law, we brought forth fruit suitable to that state and condition. But now being freed from the law, and married unto Christ, it is meet and right, equal and fit, that we should bring forth fruit answerable to our more excellent state and condition; that now we serve God with new hearts and lives by the spirit of Christ, according to the law of grace, and not carnally, in the bondage and terror of the old law, called here, *"the oldness of the letter."* Learn hence, 1. That all sincere and serious Christians, who are dead to the law, and espoused unto Christ, ought to bring forth fruit unto God, suitable to their noble estate and most honourable condition. Pardon and deliverance from the rigour and curse of the law ought to bind us the more strongly to God, to love and serve him, to glorify and obey him. Learn, 2. That all true believers, who are freed from the rigour and curse of the law, ought to serve the Lord in true holiness both of heart and life, and to yield a new and universal obedience to him. This the apostle here calls, *the newness of the spirit*, to intimate to us, that new obedience is the work of the Holy Spirit in us, as the author of all grace and sanctification. And whereas the *newness of the spirit* is opposed to the *oldness of the letter*; that is, the ministry of the law, which of itself is a dead letter, discovering sin, but not discovering how sin may be either pardoned or subdued, we may gather, That the law of God, and indeed the whole word of God, without the Spirit, is but a dead letter, unable to work grace and holiness in us, or to excite and quicken us unto newness of life. Whenever then we place ourselves under the word, let us pray with David, *Lord open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy law.*

7 What shall we say then? *Is the law sin?* God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

Observe here, 1. The objection (which the apostle answers) that some were ready to make against the holiness of the law. He had affirmed at ver. 5, *that the motions of sin were stirred up by the law.* "If so, say some, then the law may seem to be the cause of sin." God forbid, says the apostle. The thought of such a conclusion ought to be abhorred. Hence learn, 1. That the holiest doctrines and truths of God are subject to be perverted and abused, and to have absurd inferences and con-

clusions drawn from them. 2. That the ministers of Christ must be able and careful, not only to propound the truth soundly, but to defend it solidly against all cavils, and wicked objections whatsoever, and to declare their utter detestation and utmost abhorrence of any such opinion that reflects dishonour upon the holy law of God. Observe, 2. The apostle's argument to confute this wicked notion of the law's being the cause of sin: *I had not known sin, but by the law.* As if the apostle had said, "That which forbids sin, discovers and condemns sin, cannot be the cause of sin; but so doth the holy law of God, it makes sin manifest in and to the conscience of the sinner: therefore the law is not sin, no exciter to it, no cause of it." Learn hence, That the law of God is so far from being the cause of sin, that by it men come to a more clear, full, distinct, and effectual knowledge of sin: *I had not known sin but by the law*; that is, not so clearly and effectually, so as to be duly humbled for it and turned from it. The light of nature shows a difference between good and evil, but the law of God represents sin as the evil of evils; in it, as in a glass, we behold the foul face of sin, and are convinced by it of the monstrous evil that it is. Observe, 3. How the apostle produces his own experience in this matter, and gives a particular instance in himself, that he *had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet*; that is, he should not have understood that the first irregular motions of the heart, the first inclinations and desires of the soul towards sin, (though not consented to by the will,) were evil, had he not by a more attentive consideration of the tenth commandment found that they were so. Learn hence, 1. That lust or concupiscence is sin, that is, original lust, the first motions of corrupt and rebellious nature, whereby our inclinations are towards evil, though our wills do not fully consent to evil. Learn 2. That so holy and spiritual is the law of God, that it discovers the sin of nature, and condemns the first motions and inclinations of the soul to sin, even to the pit of hell. All the wisdom of the Heathen, yea, of the wisest and most learned persons in the world, was never able to discover the first motions arising from our rebellious natures to be sin: only the holy law of God makes them known, and discovers them to be sins. *I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* Such is the holiness of the law of God, that it requires not only the purity of our actions, but also the integrity of all our faculties.

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law, sin was dead.

Observe here, A concession or grant made by the apostle, that although the law was not the formal cause of sin, yet sin was an accidental event of the law, through the depravity and corruption of our natures; lust or concupiscence in us being stirred up more strongly, and breaking forth more violently in us, by being prohibited and restrained by the law. As things forbidden us, are the more desired by us; the more the law would restrain sin through our corruption, the more it enrages sin; as the more you would dam up a torrent, the more it swells. The *sin takes occasion by the commandment to work all manner of concupiscence in us*. Learn hence, That such is the depravity and perverseness of our present natures, that there is found within us a propensity and inclination to all sin; and although the law of God doth not give the least countenance to sin, yet sin takes occasion from the restraints of the law to grow more impetuous, and is the more irritated from being prohibited: and consequently it is not from ourselves, but from God's restraining grace, that those evil inclinations which are in our hearts do not break forth in our lives. The apostle adds, *Without the law sin was dead*; that is, without the knowledge and due consideration of the law, sin is comparatively dead; that is, the corruption of nature lies hid, and is not so much known to be sin; nor had it so much power to terrify the conscience, and to stir up inordinate affections, as after the law is known and duly considered. Learn hence, That such as either know not the word and law of God, or do not duly consider it, have very little sense of inward pollution; but their corruption lies as it were dead in them, and they in that, without touching the conscience, or laying the soul under sensible apprehensions of its sin and danger. *Without the law, sin is dead*. Sin in the conscience is like a lion asleep in his den; it awakes not, stirs not, terrifies and accuses not, till the law of God rouses it; and then the sinner sees himself under the curse, and liable to perdition.

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

As if the apostle had said, "Formerly, when I lived a Pharisee, and had the law in my hand, but did not consider in my heart what exactness and perfection it re-

quired in my life, I contented myself with an outward observation of it, and concluded my state to be very good and safe: but when I came to a right understanding of the word and law of God, and to be convinced by it that the inward lustings and inordinate desires of the heart were sins, then I found myself a guilty creature, obnoxious to wrath, and in a state of death." Here note, 1. The good opinion the apostle had, and all unregenerate men have of themselves, before conversion: *I was alive once*. By life, understand liveliness, confidence, and assurance of his good estate and condition; he was full of vain hope, false joy, and presumptuous confidence. Learn hence, That natural and unregenerate persons are usually very full of groundless confidence and cheerfulness, without the least suspicion of their bad estate and sad condition: *I was alive without the law once*. Note, 2. The apprehension and opinion which St. Paul had, and others will have of themselves, when they come under the regenerating work of the Spirit by the ministry of the word and law of God: *When the commandment came, I died*. Death here stands opposed to life before, and denotes the sorrows, fears, and tremblings, which seized upon his soul, when he was convinced of the badness of his condition; it stabbed all his carnal mirth, joy, and jollity, at the very heart: *I died*. Note, 3. The cause and reason of this wonderful alteration and change of judgment in the apostle; it was the commandment and law of God: *When the commandment came*, that is, close and home to my heart and conscience with a divine efficacy. The commandment was come before to him by way of promulgation, and he had the literal knowledge of it; but now it came in the convincing power and spiritual application of it. Accordingly, *sin revived*, that is, the sense of sin was more lively imprinted upon his soul; and now he died, all his vain hopes gave up the ghost now, and his sin and guilt stared in the face of his conscience. Learn hence, That there is a mighty efficacy in the word or law of God to kill vain confidence, and quench carnal mirth in the hearts of men, when God sets it home upon their consciences: *I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died*.

10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

Observe here, 1. The natural end and use of the commandment or law of God, *It was ordained unto life*; that is, it was

given for a rule of life, and promised eternal salvation to the perfect fulfilling of it. But no man since the fall being able perfectly to fulfil the law in his own person, can be justified by the law in the sight of God: however, the proper end for which the law was ordained was to give life to them that should perfectly keep it. Observe, 2. The contrary use which the apostle found the law to be of, with reference unto himself: *what was ordained to life, he found to be unto death*: that is, through his own corruption and transgression it became an occasion of death to him, by binding him over to punishment, and rendering him obnoxious to the wrath of God. Thus the word of God, the sweet and saving word of God, that word which God had ordained to bring men to life and salvation, is found to some the savour of death unto death; but the fault is not in the word, but in themselves.

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

As if the apostle had said, "Sin, or the corruption of my heart and nature, being stirred up by the commandment which forbids lust, and condemns it, enticed me, and persuaded me, and prevailed over me, to yield to the lusts of my own heart, and then condemned me, and slew me for yielding to them." See here the true and genuine nature of sin; it first deceives, and then destroys. It deceived me, saith the apostle, and then slew me. Sin doth perfectly besot the creature, and renders it injudicious: it befools and deceives us, it pollutes and defiles us, it doth debase and degrade us, and without repentance damns and destroys us. God keep us from being hardened in sinning through the deceitfulness of sin; let no profit tempt us, no pleasure entice us, no power embolden us, no privacy encourage us, to adventure upon any known sin; for its embraces are deadly, it leads to death, and ends in death; after it has deceived us, it certainly destroys us; *Sin taking occasion deceived me, and by it slew me.*

12 Wherefore the law is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Observe here, What care and holy caution the apostle uses to vindicate and clear the holy law of God from all fault and blame, charging his guilt not upon the commandment, but upon the corruption of his own heart, which took occasion to be stirring in him, and by the command-

ment slew him; affirming nevertheless, that the law of God in itself, and in its own nature, is holy, just, and good. Here note, That the apostle adorns the law with the most excellent eulogy and commendation. 'Tis holy, 1. as it enjoins all acts of piety towards God; namely, adoration of his majesty, imitation of his purity, resignation to his providence, obedience to his commands. 2. 'Tis just, as it directs us in our duty to others in every capacity and relation wherein we stand, and obliges us to walk by that rule of equity, to do to others as we would they should do unto us. 3. 'Tis good to the man that keeps it, commanding nothing but what is influential upon his well-being both here and hereafter. Could we set aside the authority of the lawgiver, yet all the precepts of the law for their moral goodness deserve our esteem, and choice, and entire observation; nothing being required of us but what is our duty and interest as men, and which tends to the perfecting and ennobling of our natures: Well then might our apostle determine that *the law is holy, the commandment holy, and just, and good.*

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

From what the apostle had said in the former verse, he moves an objection in this verse: "Seeing the law was holy, and just, and good, how comes it to be unto death? *Was that which was good made death unto me?*" To this he replies both by way of negation, *God forbid*; for to find fault with the law, is to find fault with God himself; and also by way of affirmation, asserting that sin is the true cause of death. The commandment indeed condemns, or is death to the sinner, yet not of itself, but because of sin; as we say of a condemned malefactor, it is not the judge, but the law, that condemns him; or strictly speaking, it is not the law, but his own guilt, that condemns him; the judge is but the mouth of the law to denounce the sentence that guilt deserves. And hereby sin appears to be what really it is, *sin, sinful*, exceeding sinful, masculinely and vigorously sinful, excessively and out of measure sinful, extremely and beyond all expression nay, beyond our comprehension sinful. Learn hence, 1. That the law of God in whole, and in every part thereof, is holy and good, both in itself and in its own nature, and revelative in its institution with respect to

man; for it was ordained unto life, *ver. 18.* Learn, 2. That this good and holy law, violated and transgressed, condemns and kills, and assigns a person over unto death. Learn, 3. That though the law condemns man's sin, and man for his sin, yet still the law is good, and not to be blamed; the law is to be justified by man, even when it condemns man: as man had no reason to break the law, so he has no cause to find fault with the law, though it binds him over to death for the breaking of it. Learn, 4. That 'tis not the law, but sin, that worketh man's death and ruin. Sin aims at no less, and will end in no less; for the wages of sin is death. Yet, 5. Sin certainly worketh man's death and destruction by that which is good, to wit, the law; for when sin hath used man to break the law, it then makes use of the law to break man; that is, to undo him by condemnation and death for breaking of it. Lastly, From hence it follows, that sin is therefore exceedingly, yea, unmeasurably sinful, poisonous, and pernicious, because it kills men; and not only so, but it kills men by that which is good, to wit, the law. That which was appointed for life, becomes the occasion of death; consequently sin is the most villainous, virulent, and deadly thing, that ever was in the world. Ah! sinful sin, hyperbolically and out of measure *sinful*, thou art a contempt of God's sovereign authority, a contrariety to his infinite holiness, a violation of his royal and righteous law, and the highest affront that can be offered to the majesty of the great and glorious God. Thou hast made man like a beast, like the worst of beasts; worse than the worst of beasts; yea, sin is worse than the devil himself, than hell itself. Sin made the devil what he is: a devil and hell never had an existence till sin had one. God was never angry till sin made him angry. O sin! 'tis thou that makest hell to be hell; and the more sin, the more hell. Well might the apostle then say here, *Sin, that it might appear sin, worketh death in me, and is become exceeding sinful.*

14 For we know that the law is spiritual;—

Still observe how the apostle goes on to assert the purity and spirituality of the law of God: *The law is spiritual*: spiritual in the author of it, God, who is an holy Spirit; spiritual in the matter of it, requiring spiritual obedience to be paid unto it, requiring perfect purity both of heart and life. Learn hence, that the moral law of God is in the nature of it purely spiritual, perfectly holy, being breathed forth by the Holy Spirit of

God, and requireth perfect purity both of heart and life, and perfect conformity to it both in the inward and outward man.—Hence some derive the word which we translate *law*, from a root which signifies to behold and consider, to contemplate and look about; intimating thereby, that the holy and spiritual law of God is diligently to be observed and considered, looked into, and meditated upon; it being so perfectly pure and holy, that it requires not only the purity of our actions, but also the integrity of our very faculties, our hearts and natures.

—But I am carnal,—

So may, 1. every unregenerate man truly say, *I am carnal*, having not only flesh in me, but prevailing in me, sin having a regency and dominion over me: he fights under the banner of corrupt nature, acting in a willing, ready, and full subjection to sin, and compliance with it; he is carnal, being under the power and unbroken strength of carnal lusts and sensual propensions, and following them in the daily course of his life. 2. *I am carnal*, may a regenerate person truly say, 1. With respect to that exact purity and spirituality both of heart and life which the holy law of God requires: the law is spiritual, and I, alas! compared with that spiritual law, am but a lump of corruption, coming infinitely short, God knows, of that uprightness and spirituality which the law of God requires. 2. A regenerate person may truly say, he is carnal, that is, in part so, having much, too much, carnality in his carnal affections found with him, and carnal infirmities cleaving to him. Such as are truly acquainted with the spirituality of the word and law of God, and, also well acquainted with their own hearts, do see sufficient cause to complain of carnal corruption abiding in them, and cleaving to them. *I am carnal*, have said, and may say, the holiest of saints, with respect to the perfect measure and degrees of holiness. Thus that holy and blessed martyr, Mr. Bradford, complains, styling himself *the hard-hearted, unbelieving, earthly-minded Bradford*; yet was a man of very tender spirit, full of faith, fruitful in good works, and exceedingly mortified to the world. Dost thou groan under the burden of indwelling corruption? know that the whole spiritual creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together with thee until now: But blessed be God for the hopes of a deliverer, and a deliverance.

—Sold under sin.

This phrase is borrowed from bondmen

or captives, some of which are sold, others sell themselves into captivity. The unregenerate man, with Ahab, sells himself to work wickedness. This denotes wilfulness and obstinacy; such a person doth voluntarily prostitute himself to the lust of Satan. A regenerate person doth not, with Ahab, sell himself, but is sold like Joseph by his brethren, and Samson by his wife; being rather passive than active. He is sometimes sin's captive, but never sin's slave; he is never sin's willing servant, but sometimes its unwilling prisoner. The holiest and best of saints, though not held in wilful slavery, thralldom, and bondage unto sin, yet corruption holds them too much, though in part unwillingly, under the tyranny of sin; they do not yield to sin, as good subjects yield to their lawful prince, voluntary obedience, but as captives yield to a tyrant, paying him involuntary subjection. His soul is betrayed, says one, by corruption to temptation, and by temptation to corruption.

15 For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

These words are an argument to prove what the apostle had asserted in the foregoing verse; namely, that he was held under the power of sin unwillingly, because he did not allow or approve of any evil which he did contrary to the holy law of God, but did hate and abominate it, was displeased with it, and with himself for it. An unregenerate man's judgment and conscience is sometimes against sin; which makes him afraid to commit it; but a gracious person's will, heart, and affections, are all set against sin: Indeed there is a regenerate and an unregenerate part in the Christian's will, (he is sanctified *totus*, but not *totaliter*;) so far as the will is renewed, it hates all sin, and meditates the ruin and destruction of it. And observe, It was not this or that particular evil, but all evil, which the apostle hated. A wicked man may hate a particular evil, as Absalom hated Ammon's uncleanness; but to hate all sin is the character of none but a regenerate person. Observe, lastly, That a good man sometimes, through the power of corruption, and the prevalence of temptation, doth that evil which is disallowed and disapproved by him; yea, which is very odious and hateful to him: he loathes in part what he doth, and afterwards loathes himself for the doing of it; and when he doth evil, allows not of the evil that he doth.

16 If then I do that which I would

not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Note, 1. How readily the apostle consented to the equity and holiness of God's law: he did love the law of God, which made holiness his duty; *I consent*, says he, *to the law, that it is good*; he assented to it in his judgment, he complied with it in his will, he clave to it in his inward affections. So far is a person regenerate, as his heart doth correspond with God's law. But may not an unregenerate person consent in his judgment to the law of God, own it to be good, approve it to be holy? Did not Herod hear the word with gladness, and the stony ground receive the word with joy? *Answer*, They may in their judgments approve, yet not in their hearts like and love, the law of God: at the same time that they commend it with their mouths, they cast it behind their backs. Note, 2. How the apostle disclaims, though not disowns, the evil done by him: *It is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me*. As if he had said, My corrupt affections sometimes overpower me against the approbation of my judgment, and the inclination of my will: *But it is not I*, according to my better part, from which I am denominated, *but sin dwelling in me*. Learn hence, That if we can disclaim the evil done by us, as being contrary to us, contrary to the habitual frame and disposition of our hearts, contrary to the deliberate purpose and settled resolution of our wills, Almighty God will not charge our failings upon us to our condemnation, but mercifully distinguish between the weakness of the flesh, and the willingness of the spirit; between us, and sin that dwelleth in us. Sin will remain and dwell, but it must not reign and rule: 'tis a busy inmate in a gracious heart, but 'tis a lordly master, yea, an imperious tyrant, in a sinner's heart. Happy he that can in truth and sincerity say, *It is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me*.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's proposition, *I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing*. That is, in my corrupt and unregenerate nature there is nothing truly and spiritually good; and this I myself am sensible of, and privy to, and very well acquainted with. Learn thence, That good men are intimately acquainted with themselves, privy to their own cor-

ruptious, sensible of the indwelling presence of sin in themselves, which calls on them to be humble, and excites them to be watchful: *I know that in me dwelleth no good thing.* Observe, 2. The confirmation of the foregoing proposition; for *to will is present with me*; that is, to will what is good, to purpose good, and to desire that which is good, is present with me; but I want ability to perform that good I purpose. Learn hence, That though to will that which is good, is ready and at hand with God's regenerate children, yet through that corruption which still abides in them, they are sometimes disabled from doing that good which they purpose, design, and desire to do; and that little good they do, is very brokenly and imperfectly done. A mortal father may as soon beget an immortal child, as an imperfect saint can perform any thing perfectly good. There can never be more in the effect, than there is in the cause: a weak grape cannot make strong wine; whilst we are saints on earth, though we may and ought to aspire after, yet we shall not be able to attain unto, the sinless perfection of the saints in heaven. A real Christian is one that is continually labouring after the attainment of that which he knows in this life he shall never attain unto; namely, perfection in grace. In heaven we shall have no occasion to complain, that *how to perform that which is good, we find not.*

19 For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Here the apostle repeats what he had before asserted, namely, That he did not always do that good which he desired to do, but sometimes being overpowered by the flesh, did what the law prohibits, and what he would not do. And farther adds, that it was no longer himself (choosing and approving the action in his mind) that did this; but sin dwelling in him, which sometimes hurried him to the commission of it against the inclination and law of his mind. Here note, 1. That the corruption of nature in the soul of man is a real, but a distinct thing from the soul itself. A dweller in an house, is really distinguished from the house he dwells in. Sin is not a substance, but the pravity and depravity of our faculties. Note, 2. That the corruption of our own hearts and natures is the root and cause of all that evil that is done by us. Note, 3. That the habitual bent, the settled purpose, and determinate

resolutions of a Christian's will, is against all sin; and he doth not sin with the full consent of his will. Although there are not two distinct persons, yet there are two distinct principles in a regenerate man. Sin and he are distinguished. In a good man there is a conflict between sin and grace; but in an unregenerate man there is no combat between the flesh and the Spirit, for he is all flesh, the flesh and he are one: the combat is not between grace and sin, but between one sin and another, and between one faculty and another. Light in the understanding opposes lust in the will; whereas the conflict in a gracious person is not between his judgment and his will, but betwixt the regenerate and unregenerate part in his will. Sin, like a preternatural bias clapped upon the soul, sometimes carries it away from the mark which the Christian aims at: however, though a good man be overcome *in prælio*, yet not *in bello*; though grace is sometimes foiled in the combat, yet it keeps the field, maintains and recovers its ground. The saint will not throw down his weapon till he lays down his life, and grace shall at length be finally victorious.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

As if the apostle had said, "I verily find sin, having an impelling power and an impulsive virtue in it, like a law in my members, thwarting and contradicting the inclinations of my mind, and the resolutions of my will; that *when I would do good, evil is present with me*, to oppose and hinder me from the doing of it." Note here, A double burden which the apostle complained of, 1. Of the presence of sin at all times, *evil is present with me*. It follows me, as if he had said, and is as inseparable from me as my shadow. This he calls a law, because of its mighty power and efficacy, and because of its constant residence in his nature. 1. Of the operation of it, especially at some particular and special times and seasons: *When I would do good, then evil is present with me*. As if he had said, "When I address myself to any holy duty, and heavenly employment, when I desire and design to draw near to God, and would hope for the sweetest fellowship and communion with him, then alas! then, to my great sorrow, is *evil present with me*. Ah! when I promise myself most comfort and communion in the enjoyment of my God, how do I then find a bad heart in the best season, a dead and drowsy spirit, when I would be most spiritual in the duties I perform!" From whence learn, That

the holiest and best of saints in this their imperfect state do sensibly feel, and sadly bewail, the working of sin and corruption in them, and that in the very seasons and opportunities of their communion with God: *When I would do good, then evil is present with me.*

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.

If by the inward man, we understand the mind and understanding of a man only, then the unregenerate person may be said to delight in the law of God, with Ezekiel's hearers, *Ezek. xxxiii. 32.* with Herod, *Mark vi. 20.* with the stony ground, *Matt. xiii. 20.* That is, they delight and satisfy themselves with the bare hearing of the word, and with a notional and speculative knowledge of their duty: either the eloquence of the preacher whom they hear, or the pleasingness of some truths which they hear, affect them with a sudden joy; they delight to hear the word, but they take no delight to do it. It is neither a spiritual delight, nor an abiding delight, that such men take in the law of God. If by the inward man, we understand that which St. Peter calls the hidden man of the heart, the new man, or the regenerate part in man, as being seated in the inward powers and faculties of the soul; then to delight in the law of God, is to love it for its purity and spirituality, because it makes holiness our duty; to take pleasure in the knowledge of the law, in meditating upon it, and in practising every good duty contained in it, and enjoined by it. Thus David did delight to do the will of God, because the law of God was within his heart. When there is *lex in corde*, there will be *cor in lege*; where the law of God is in the heart, there the heart will be engaged in that obedience which is by the law required, and by the Christian performed. He delights in the law, and the law is delighted in by him.

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Here observe, That in this and the foregoing verses mention is made of four laws contending one against another, whereof two are on one side, and two on the other; namely, The law of God, and the law of the mind; the law of the members, and the law of sin. By the law of God is understood the word of God; by the law of the mind is understood, in the regenerate,

grace in the heart, in the unregenerate, light in the conscience; by the law of the members, understand original lust and concupiscence; by the law of sin, those corrupt principles according to which lust governs. Learn hence, That there is a conflict or combat between the law of the mind, and the law of the members, and this both in regenerate and unregenerate persons. This appears, 1. By the testimony of nature speaking in the heathen. Thus Medea, *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*: their rational appetite displaceth reason, and leads it captive. By the testimony of scripture; and that, (1.) As to the unregenerate: witness Herod, *Mark vi. 26.* who had a conflict between lust and conscience; as had also Pilate upon the occasion of our Saviour's death, conscience bid him spare, popularity bid him kill. (2.) As to the regenerate, *Gal. v. 17, The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, &c.* (3.) By the testimony of experience. Who finds not every day within himself a contest of contrary motions and inclinations? A Christian's bosom is like Rebecca's womb, it has twins of two contrary natures: a smooth Jacob and rough Esau, flesh and spirit. But wherein consists the difference between that conflict which is found in the natural and spiritual, the regenerate and unregenerate man? *Ans.* 1. The conflict in an unregenerate person is not between grace and sin, but betwixt one lust and another; the struggle is, which lust shall be in the throne, as rebels in a kingdom having cast off the authority of their lawful prince, every one snatches at the sceptre, and would command and rule. Thus every lust is ambitious of superiority, and usurps a regency in the soul: so that though the sinner oft changes his master, yet not his servitude, he is a slave still. Now from this contrariety of lusts rebelling in a carnal heart, he is necessitated to oppose the lusts which he favours less, to gratify another which he favours more. Thus the conflict is between sin and sin, not betwixt grace and sin. (2.) As an unregenerate man's combat with sin is betwixt one lust and another, so it is only between one faculty and another. Thus light in the understanding opposes lust in the will. The judgment and conscience of a sinner says, "O do not that abominable thing which the soul of God hates." But then lust in the will votes for it, and is angry with conscience for being so bold as to oppose it. Whereas the conflict in a regenerate person is between grace and sin, not betwixt sin and sin; and not betwixt the understanding and the

will, but betwixt the regenerate and unregenerate part in the same will. And although grace be foiled in a particular combat, yet it keeps the field, and the Christian will not throw down his weapon till he lays down his life.

24 O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?

These words are a sad and sorrowful complaint of the present and too great prevalence of indwelling sin, and unsubdued corruption ; and in them observe, 1. The person complaining, St. Paul. 2. The matter of the complaint, not of affliction, but of sin ; not of a death, but of a body of sin and death which he carried about with him. 3. The manner of the complaint ; 'tis with vehemence and affection, it is *Vox anhelantis*, the voice of one that pants and breathes after deliverance ; not of one that doubted, much less desponded, of a deliverer and a deliverance. As if the apostle had said, "O how I am tired and wearied with continual conflicts and strivings with indwelling sin ! How do the remains of unsubdued sin, and (as yet) unmortified corruption, affect and afflict me ! Who will deliver me, and when shall deliverance be enjoyed by me." Learn hence, that there are sad remains of indwelling sin, and unsubdued corruption, in the very best and holiest of God's children and servants in this life, which they sadly complain of, sensibly groan under, daily watch against, continually conflict with, and shall in God's time be fully and finally delivered from.

25 I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here the apostle espies a deliverer, the *Lord Jesus Christ* ; one that had delivered him from the condemning and reigning power of sin, and would ere long deliver him from the presence as well as prevalence of sin. And whereas the apostle styles Christ Jesus not his Lord, but *our Lord* ; that is, the Lord of all believers ; it gives us this consolation and joyful assurance, that the happy hour is at hand, when we shall be everlastingly freed from the indwelling presence of sin, from all temptations to sin, from all inclinations to offend, yea, from all possibility of sinning : when we shall obey God with vigour, praise him with cheerfulness, love him without measure, fear him without torment, trust in him without despondency, serve him without weariness, without interruption or distraction, being perfectly

like unto God, as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality. Lord strengthen our faith in the belief of this desirable happiness, (when and where nothing shall corrupt our purity, nothing shall disturb our peace,) and set our souls a longing for the full fruition and final enjoyment of it.

—So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Here the apostle acknowledges two principles in himself ; grace and sin, a sweet and bitter fountain, from whence did flow suitable streams. The law of the mind inclined to serve *the law of God* ; but the law in his members disposed him to obey *the law of sin*. The habitual bent of a good man's heart is to serve the law of God ; he loves it, and delights to obey it. Yet sometimes, contrary to his firmest resolutions, through the power of temptations and indwelling corruption, he is carried aside contrary to his covenant and his conscience ; but he laments it, it is his grief, his shame, the sorrow of his heart, the burden of his soul, that ever he should be so false and unworthy. In fine, if a good man, at a particular time, does the evil that he hates, he always hates the evil which he does. Blessed be God, sin shall never hurt us, if it does not please us. As God will not finally judge us, so we ought not censoriously to judge one another, or injuriously to judge ourselves by a single act, by a particular action, but by the habitual and constant bent of our resolutions, and the general course and tenor of our conversation. Blessed be God for the covenant of grace !

CHAP. VIII.

This chapter is a summary of evangelical duty, and a magazine of Christian comfort ; we cannot wish to be more holy than to do what is here enjoined, nor more happy than to possess what is here promised. For sublimity of matter, for variety of evangelical truths, for admirable support and comfort to believers, this chapter is not inferior to any part whatsoever of the holy scriptures. Here the believer's union with Christ, and exemption from condemnation, the Spirit's agency in freeing from the dominion of sin, the law's inability to justify and save, the incarnation and satisfaction of Christ, are set forth and declared. In short, the whole chapter is consolatory ; there is a vein of heavenly comfort running through the whole body of it. With this it begins and with this it ends. It begins with no condemnation to believers, ver. 1. I. ends with no separation from the love of God, ver. 38, 39. Let the sincere and serious Christian study, weigh, digest, believe, and apply, what is laid down in this chapter, and let him walk dejectedly if he can. This chapter before us may be divided into three parts : The first contains powerful supports for such as groan under the burden of indwelling sin. The second

contains consolations under sufferings and afflictions. The third abounds with high and holy triumphs over both sin and sufferings, to the end of the chapter.

THERE is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Observe here, 1. The apostle doth not say, there is no corruption in them that are in Christ Jesus, but there is no *condemnation* to them. Perfection in holiness is the saint's aim in this life, his attainment only in the next. 2. He doth not say, there is no correction belongs to them, but no condemnation; corrected they may be, condemned they never shall be; yea, they are therefore corrected, that they may never be condemned. 3. The apostle doth not say, there is nothing that deserves condemnation, nothing damnable in them; but no actual condemnation belonging to them. 4. He doth not say, there is no condemnation to this or that particular believer, to himself, and such as had attained to the like measures and degrees of grace with himself; but he extends the privilege to all believers indefinitely, *There is no condemnation to them*; that is, to any of them that are in Christ Jesus. 5. He says not, there *shall* be no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, but there is *now* none: he hath everlasting life, and is already passed from death to life. 6. Our apostle doth not say, there are not many condemnations belonging to them, but not any: *as is*, not one either from law or gospel; for the gospel has its condemnatory sentence as well as the law; yea, the highest and sorest condemnation is that which the gospel denounces, John iii. 19. *This is the condemnation, that light, &c.* Learn hence, 1. That it is a great felicity and happiness, not to be obnoxious to condemnation. 2. That this felicity and happiness is the portion of all those, and only those, that are in Christ Jesus; not by external federation, and visible profession only, but by virtue of a personal implantation into him by faith. Learn, 3. That such as are *thus* in Jesus Christ, obey not the inclinations of corrupt nature, but the holy motions of the blessed Spirit of God. Learn, 4. That a uniform and constant course of holy walking in the paths of sincere obedience, is both the indubitable mark and character, and also the indispensable duty and obligation, of all such as are freed by Christ from condemnation.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

If by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, be meant the doctrine of the gospel, which is called the ministration of the Spirit, then the note is, that the gospel or new covenant is a law, that it is the law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus, and that it sets the sincere Christian at liberty from the slavery of sin, and the condemning power of the law. If by the law of the Spirit of life be understood a real and vital principle of regenerating grace, working a new and heavenly life in the soul with great power and efficacy; thence we learn, 1. That the holy and blessed Spirit of God is a spirit of life. (1.) Essentially and formally in himself; as the Father hath life in himself, so the Spirit hath life in himself also. And, (2.) effectively or casually, with respect to us. He is a quickening or life-giving Spirit, being the original spring and fountal cause of that spiritual life which is in a gracious soul. Learn, 2. That every person, before the Spirit of life takes hold of him, is under the law of sin and death. Learn, 3. That such as are truly regenerate, are made free from the law of sin and death. 4. That it is by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that any soul is made free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

That is, when mankind could by no means be freed from sin and death, God sent his own and only Son to be a sacrifice for sin, that our liberty might be fully accomplished. Observe here, 1. The impotency and weakness of the law declared; there is something which the law cannot do, it cannot justify, it cannot save, because it requires that which the fallen creature can never perform, and cannot make reparation for what the fallen creature has done. Learn hence, That the moral law of God, though an holy and excellent law, and designed by God for holy and excellent ends; yet having now to do with fallen man, is become weak, and altogether unable to justify and save. Observe, 2. The reason of the law's impotency and weakness assigned: *It is weak through the flesh*; that is, through our corrupt and depraved natures. Its weakness doth not arise from itself; but from us; the law properly is not weak to us, but we are weak to that. The law retains its authority of commanding, but we have lost our power of obeying. No mere man, since the fall, was able perfectly to observe the

law of God. None ever could keep the law of God perfectly, but the first Adam; none ever could and did keep it perfectly, but the second Adam. Observe, 3. The way and means which the wisdom of God found out for relieving the law's impotency, and for the fallen sinner's recovery: *He sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.* Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ was God's own Son, the Son of himself, his natural Son, co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal with the Father, partaking of his Father's essence by an eternal and ineffable generation. 2. That Jesus Christ was sent, and sent by God the Father: he was sent, therefore he had a being before his incarnation; for that which was not, could not be sent; he was sent by the Father, therefore he was and is a person, and a person really distinct from the Father; the one sends, and the other is sent. But what doth God's sending Christ imply? *Ans.* His appointing and ordaining of him before all time to the work and office of a Mediator; his qualifying and fitting him in time for that great work and office; and his authoritative injunction of him to take upon him our nature, and in that nature to make satisfaction for our sin. 3. That Christ, God's own Son, was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in likeness of flesh: it was real flesh that Christ assumed; but like unto sinful flesh he was dealt with and handled, treated and used, just as guilty men are; accused of gluttony, wine-bibbing, sorcery, blasphemy, and what not; arraigned, condemned, executed for an impostor, deceiver, blasphemers, and breaker of the law. Thus, though no sinner, yet was he reputed a sinner, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh. 4. That the end for which Christ was sent by God, was through the sacrifice of his death to condemn sin, that is, to expiate and take away the guilt of sin, so as that it shall never be charged upon believers to their eternal condemnation. For sin he condemned sin in the flesh. Blessed be God, condemning sin is condemned by a condemned Saviour.

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Our apostle here assigns another end and cause for which God sent his Son into the world; namely, to do what the law commanded, as well as to suffer what the law threatened; perfectly to fulfil the righteousness of the law for us, which it was impossible for us to do for ourselves; for the sake of which we are accounted

righteous in the sight of God. Learn hence, 1. That our Lord Jesus Christ, being made under the law fulfilled the law; whatsoever the law did or could demand, is fully satisfied and fulfilled by Christ. Learn, 2. That Christ having fulfilled the law in our behalf, whatever can be required of us by the way of punishment is discharged likewise. Learn, 3. That though the righteousness of the law be fulfilled for us by Christ, yet the gospel righteousness must be performed by us ourselves. Christ has answered the demands of the law for us, but will never fulfil the conditions of the gospel for us. We must repent ourselves, obey ourselves, or Christ's obedience will profit us nothing; none can safely or comfortably pretend to an interest in Christ's obedience, either active or passive, but only such who in their course are acted and influenced by the Spirit, and not by the flesh. *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

5 For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Observe here, 1. A difference of persons mentioned; those that are after the flesh, and them that are after the Spirit. 2. A difference of properties belonging to these persons; the one minds the things of the flesh, the other the things of the Spirit. They mind them; that is, they relish and savour them, they lay out their thoughts about them, and let out their endeavours after them. Learn hence, 1. That there are but two sorts of men in the world, some after the flesh, and some after the Spirit. 2. That these two different sorts of men have two different objects, which they savour and relish; namely, the things of the flesh, and the things of the Spirit. 3. That all men discover the true temper of their minds, and the complexion and disposition of their souls, by the respect which they give to either of these objects, by minding the things of the flesh, or the things of the Spirit; that is, by minding them willingly and cheerfully, resolvedly and constantly.

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace:

In the former verse we had a description of those that are carnal, and them that are spiritual. In this verse we have the end of the one, and the issue of the other: the end of the one is death, the issue of

the other is spiritual life, joy, and peace. Observe, 1. The end and condition of all carnally-minded persons, so remaining, and still continuing, it is death; always demeritoriously, that which deserves death; and sometimes actually it procures and hastens the sinner's death; but especially it exposeth to an endless and eternal death. Observe, 2. The sweet fruit and joyful issue of spiritual-mindedness: it is *life and peace*. 1. It is life, it is eternal life initially, and it leads to eternal life ultimately. Grace is the first degree of glory, and glory but the highest degree of grace. 2. It is peace; to be spiritually-minded lays the foundation of peace with God, with conscience, with the world; the fruit of righteousness is peace, quietness, and assurance for ever:

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

By the carnal mind, are meant the rational powers corrupted by our sensitive appetite, or a mind enslaved by sensual lusts. Such a temper of mind is opposite to, yea, enmity against, God and goodness. Learn hence, 1. That carnal persons are no better than enemies unto God: there is a perfect contrariety in their affections, inclinations, and actions, to the will of God. They are called haters of God; not that they hate him as a Creator, but as a law giver, they hate his holiness, not his goodness. Learn, 2. That whilst men remain carnally-minded, there is no breaking off this enmity between God and them; *the carnal mind, whilst such, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*; not that this impotency and inability will excuse from guilt, because it is not created, but a self-contracted impotency, not a natural, but a moral impotency, which arises from a perverse disposition of will, is joined with a delight in sin, and a strong aversion from the holy commands of God. Man must thank himself, and not God, for his lame hand. That he cannot be subject to the law of God, is occasioned by his natural enmity and contracted hardness of heart against God.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

To be in the flesh, is not barely to have the flesh in us, but prevailing in us; to be wholly possessed by the flesh, to be drenched and drowned in sin; instead of fighting under Christ's banner against sin, to fight under the banner of corrupt nature against Christ. Such cannot please God:

they cannot but displease him, both in their persons and in their actions; for none can please him that are unsuitable and unlike unto him, because all liking is founded in likeness, and all complacency in correspondency. Learn hence, That carnal men neither do nor can please God, because not renewed by God, nor reconciled to him: *Such as are in the flesh, cannot please God*.

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.—

Observe, He doth not say, the flesh is not in you, but ye are not in the flesh, so as to be actuated and influenced, guided and governed, misled and carried away, by it. Sincere and serious Christians, although they live in the flesh, yet do they not live after the flesh. *But ye are in the Spirit*; that is, illuminated, inclined, and enabled by the Spirit to do the will of God: *And the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*, as a spirit of truth to enlighten your understandings, as a spirit of holiness to renew your will and affections, as a spirit of love to inspire the soul with divine and unutterable desires after the favour and grace of God; and the phrase *dwelleth* imports presence and propriety, fellowship and intimacy, operation and activity, residence and constancy of abode.

—Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Observe here, 1. That the Holy Ghost is called the *Spirit of Christ*, passively and by way of reception, as being bestowed upon him, and received by him; also actively, and by way of collation, as being bestowed by him, and conveyed from him. Observe, 2. That all sincere Christians have the Spirit of Christ; they have him for the blessing of conversion, they have him for the benefit of communion; he dwells in them by his sanctifying impressions, powerful assistances, quickening and comfortable influences; he pours in both the oil of grace, and also the oil of joy and gladness, into their hearts. Observe, 3. There are some that have not the Spirit of Christ: such as are carnal and sensual have not the Spirit, such as are censorious and envious have not the Spirit, such as are malicious and revengeful have not the Spirit; such as are implacable, and of an irreconcilable temper of spirit, have not the Spirit of Christ. Observe, 4. That all such as have not the Spirit of Christ, are none of Christ's: they have no spiritual relation to him, they have no special interest in him, and

can expect no present consolation or future happiness from him: the proposition is indefinite and without exception. *If any man, prince or peasant, rich or poor, bond or free, have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of Christ's.*

10 And if Christ *be* in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

If Christ be in you, that is, by his Holy Spirit, the body is dead, that is, still subject to death, because of sin, which will never cease to be in us till we die; but the Spirit is life, that is, will give life to it again, because of righteousness, or of that justification which is unto life. Learn hence, That Christ in believers is a sure pledge and earnest to them of eternal life, both in body and soul. Christ is in believers two ways, 1. Objectively, as the object is in the faculty, or the things we think of, love, and delight in, are in our hearts and minds: thus Christ is said to dwell in our hearts by faith. 2. Effectively; so Christ is in believers by his Spirit, whose gracious influences produce life in them, and likeness unto him. Learn, 2. That the bodies of believers in whom Christ dwells, are subject to death as well as other men's, and that because of sin both original and actual; sin brought mortality into their natures, death entered the world by sin, and sin goes out of the world by death; they are by Christ delivered from the sting, but not from the stroke of death: Their bodies are dead because of sin. Learn, 3. That believers, though mortal, and subject to death in regard to their bodies, yet they live, and are in a state of immortality, in regard of their souls. The Spirit is life; that is, the spirit of the believer is immortal, yet not exclusively, but emphatically; not as if other men's souls did not live after death, but it is a life worse than death; 'tis a special immortality that the believer is partaker of. Learn, 4. The spirit of life because of righteousness. If we understand it of Christ's righteousness, that gives us a right and title to salvation; if of our own inherent righteousness, that is a qualification to fit and prepare for eternal life and salvation: take it in either sense, it teaches us, that without righteousness there can be no hope of eternal life and happiness; we can be neither fit for the employment of heaven, nor for the enjoyment of heaven, without it. Coloss. i. 12.

11 But if the Spirit of him, that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mor-

tal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

As if the apostle had said, "Although your body must die, yet it shall live again in the morning of the resurrection, and that by virtue of the Spirit of Christ which dwelleth in you, and is the bond of union with him your head; others shall be raised by the power of Christ as their judge, but you shall be raised by virtue of your union with him as your head; They are raised *officio Judicis, beneficio Mediatoris.*" Observe here, An happy resurrection promised, and the condition upon which that promise is made and insured: 1. An happy resurrection promised; the same Holy Spirit of God that raised Christ shall raise you, because the same Spirit dwelleth in you. Learn thence, That the bodies of the saints are the temples of the Holy Ghost, his dwelling-place, living, dying, and dead; if the Holy Spirit dwells in us here, sanctifying our persons, the same Spirit will not forsake our bodies in the grave, but raise them up to glory and happiness. Death dissolves all other unions except that betwixt the believer and the Spirit of Christ; but the grave itself cannot separate them. Observe, 2. The condition upon which this promise is made and insured: *If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you.* Where note, 1. A blessed relation; the Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of the Father, because the Father is the fountain and original of the Deity, and doth communicate it both to the Son and to the Spirit, to teach us to seek unto the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit, he being the donor and dispenser of it. Note, 2. A glorious operation; the Spirit raised up Jesus from the dead. Where observe, That the holy scriptures ascribe Christ's resurrection to all the three persons in the glorious Trinity: the Father raised him, Acts x. 40. *Him God raised up the third day.* Christ raised himself, John x. 18. *I have power to lay down my life, and to take it up again.* The Holy Ghost raised up Christ, 1 Pet. iii. 18. *He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.* Note, 3. A gracious possession, and special inhabitation: *He dwelleth in us*, in our hearts by his gifts and graces, in our bodies as his living temples: which proves him to be really God, for none but a God possesses a temple; and also to be a distinct person, not an energy or operation, for none but a person can be said to inhabit or dwell; and should teach us to take heed of defiling our bodies by any uncleanness, which are or ought to be the temples of the Holy Ghost; "For if any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy."

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

That is, Seeing the Holy Spirit dwelleth in us, quickening our souls for the present, and raising our bodies for time to come, furnishing the one with grace here, and fitting the other for glory hereafter: therefore we ought to live unto God, and not to the flesh; we are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh. Where note, That the word flesh is not to be taken in a physical, but a moral sense; not in a physical sense, for the body of man; every one is a *debtor* to his own body, he owes it food and clothing, nourishment and provision. The beast must be fed, though not pampered, lest it kick and throw its rider. But flesh is here to be taken in a moral sense, for sin, for the unregenerate and unsanctified part in man: and then the sense is, that no man owes any thing to the service and satisfaction of his sinful lusts and inordinate desires; none of us owe sin, Satan, or the world, an hour's service; these are not warrantable creditors for any of us to be indebted to. Learn hence, That believers are not indebted, or owe any thing to the flesh, but all to the Spirit; the flesh is a cheater, an usurper, an oppressor: what it calls for, it has no right to demand: but the Spirit is a just creditor, and we are greatly indebted to him, as the author and producer of grace in us, and as he is the preserver and increaser of that grace in us which he has begun. O blessed Spirit! we owe all that we are, and all that we have, to thee, all that we have in hand, and all that we have in hope; thou hast a right to all, yea, more than all that we can pay thee, so infinitely are we indebted to thee. But for sin and the flesh, we never promised any thing to it, we never got any thing by it, nothing but shame and sorrow from it, and therefore we are not indebted to it. Lord, keep us from being debtors to the most cruel and severe creditors in the world, sin and Satan; for the more we pay to them, the more we run in arrears with thee, to whose justice we must pay the uttermost farthing.

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live

Our apostle here adds a farther reason why a Christian should not live after the flesh: before an argument was drawn a *Debito*, now a *Damno*. He told us in the former verse we owed nothing to the flesh, here he acquaints us what losers we shall

be by living to the flesh: *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die*; which words are a dreadful commination, and severe threatening. In which, observe, 1. The persons threatened; ye, the believing Romans, called to be saints, chap. i. 7. even they are threatened with hell, who were candidates of heaven: he threatens them with death, to keep them from death. Learn thence, That the ministers of God may use arguments drawn from hell torments to dissuade the holiest and best saints from sin, and to persuade them to duty; *If ye live after the flesh, &c.* Observe, 2. The threatening itself, *Ye shall die*. Learn thence, That Almighty God threateneth all those that live after the flesh with nothing less than eternal death and damnation. To live after the flesh, is to have the flesh our governing principle, our work and trade, our scope and end; and to die for living after the flesh, is to undergo a temporal, spiritual, and eternal death; an everlasting banishment from the blessed presence of him in whose presence is fullness of joy: *But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*. The former words were a threatening to excite our industry; these are a promise to prevent our dejection. In which observe, 1. The act specified, or duty enjoined, and that is mortification: *If ye mortify*, that is, kill every sin. 'Tis not enough to oppose sin, but we must destroy sin; nothing but the destruction of sin must content us. Note also, The continuance of the act, *If ye do mortify*; though they had already mortified sin, yet they are called upon to proceed in the work: the axe must be daily laid to the root, and the knife must still stick in the throat of sin, till it drops down dead. Mortification must be continual, and it must necessarily be painful; nothing that has life will be put to death without pain and struggling; the longer we delay to mortify sin, the more painful shall we make it to ourselves. Observe, 2. The proper object of this duty, *The deeds of the body*: by which all sin is to be understood, relating both to the inward and outward man, though the latter only be mentioned, because the body is that which is *manifestatum peccati*, it is that wherein sin doth especially show and discover itself. Learn hence, *Mortification* must be universal as well as continual, not one deed, but deeds; not the deeds of the body only, but of the soul also, must be mortified; all evil dispositions, depraved habits, corrupt affections, as well as irregular actions, must be watched against, and the whole body of sin become the object of mortification. Observe, 3. The agents in

this work, and they are two : 1. The more principal agent is the Holy Spirit. 2. The less principal is the Christian himself. *If ye through the Spirit*; we can do nothing without him, he will do nothing without us. Learn hence, That in mortifying sin the Spirit's assistance and our endeavours must concur: mortification indeed is not the work of nature, yet man must be an agent in it, not in his own but in God's strength; we have brought sin, that rebel, into our own souls, and we must use our own endeavours to cast it out; true, it cannot be done alone by ourselves, but it will never be done without ourselves: we can sin of ourselves, but cannot overcome sin by ourselves; we know how to be slaves, but are unable of ourselves to be conquerors. The believer is *principium actuum*, but the spirit is *principium effectuum*. Observe, 4. The reward promised to the performers and performance of this duty: *Ye shall live*; namely, a life of grace and holiness, a life of joy and comfort, a life of glory and happiness. Our life of grace is an evidence and an earnest of the life of glory: grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace in the fruit. Learn, That a life of grace and comfort on earth, together with a life of glory and happiness in heaven, is and shall be the assured portion and privilege of all those, who, by the Spirit's assistance, and their own concurring endeavours, do mortify sin, and crucify the deeds of the body: *If ye mortify, &c. ye shall live*: that is, holily, comfortably, and eternally; ye shall live a life of exemplary graciousness, a life of highest delight and pleasure on earth, and of eternal blessedness and glory in heaven.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Observe here, 1. A glorious privilege proclaimed the being *the sons of God*. 2. description of the persons to whom that privilege doth belong, they are such as are led by the Spirit of God. Learn, 1. That the Holy Spirit of God doth perform the office of a guide and leader to all the children of God! he gives life and motion to them by infusing gracious habits, (*Ezek. xxxvi. 26.*) by exciting the soul to act suitably thereunto, and by assisting it in acting; he gives directions and guidance to them, he directs their actions, by enlightening their understandings, by guiding their inclinations, by influencing and inclining their wills; and where he guides he governs. A general that leads an army, orders its motions and marches; as Christ was, so the Holy Spirit is, a leader and commander

to the people. Learn, 2. That such as are thus led by the Spirit of God, may know and conclude themselves to be the sons of God, because holiness is a certain evidence of adoption. Such as are led by God's Spirit, are undoubtedly God's children; and such as are not his children, refuse to be led by the Spirit, but live under the uncontrolled activity of their own.

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again, to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Observe, 1. That there is a spirit of bondage, which the children of God do for some time receive, working fear in them. By the spirit of bondage, understand those convictions and terrors of conscience which awakened persons labour under, when the law of God charges them home with the guilt of sin, and lays them under direful apprehensions of the wrath of God. The spirit of bondage is neither to be slighted, nor yet to be rested in; not to be slighted, because it is preparatory to conversion: and not to be rested in, because it is like a spark of hell kindled in the conscience; it is as a bearded arrow shot into the conscience, which only the hand of God can pluck out. Observe, 2. That the spirit of bondage to God's children, is succeeded by and ends in a Spirit of adoption; the signs of such a spirit are a child-like love to God, a child-like fear and hope, a child-like trust and dependence, and a child-like obedience to his commands.—Observe, 3. That God's Holy Spirit, after he has once been a Spirit of adoption, never again becomes a spirit of bondage to the same soul: *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage, again to fear*. Observe, 4. That one principal work of the Spirit of adoption is to enliven and embolden the soul in prayer, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father*.

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

Observe here, 1. That our adoption into God's family is evidenced by the testimony of the Spirit, bearing witness to and with our spirits: here are two witnesses produced to testify the truth of a believer's adoption, namely, God's Spirit and his own; the Spirit testifies by laying down marks of trial in the holy scriptures, by working such graces in us as are peculiar to God's children, and by helping us to discover this work in our own souls more clearly and evidently; our own spirits testify by reflecting upon our primitive conversion, upon our habitual disposition,

upon our general conversation; the Spirit testifies our adoption by evidencing to us our sanctification: and all this is done, not by sudden impulses, and immediate inspirations, which is the witnessing of the Spirit that enthusiasts pretend to; but the Spirit witnesses in a way of argumentation. Thus, whoever repents, believes, and obeys the gospel, says the scripture, shall be saved; but the Spirit helps us to see that we do so, and accordingly enables us to infer and conclude that we shall be saved. Observe, 2. That a Christian may in this life, without a divine revelation, attain a well-grounded assurance of his adoption and salvation; for the Spirit of God both bear witness to him, and bears witness with him, as touching the sincerity of his heart and life. Observe lastly, That there is no safe and secure way to prove our adoption, but by testimonies brought of our sanctification: the privy seal of our adoption must be thus attested under the broad seal of our sanctification; the goodness of our state and condition must be evidenced by the holiness of our lives and conversation.

17 And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;—

Our apostle, having asserted and insured the believer's adoption in the foregoing verses, doth in this verse infer the certainty of his inheritance: *If children, then heirs*. Learn thence, That all God's children, by special grace and adoption, are undoubted heirs of a blessed and glorious inheritance. He next declares whom they are heirs of, and whom they are heirs with; they are *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*. 1. They are heirs of God, they do inherit God himself, their Father is their portion: man leaves his heirs what he has, God gives his heirs what he is; he which gives them the inheritance, is the inheritance itself which he gives them, by being not only heirs to him, but heirs of him: they have an interest in all his attributes: his wisdom is theirs to guide and direct them, his power is theirs to sustain and preserve them, his mercy and pity is theirs to relieve and succour them. O happy and blessed privilege of God's adopted ones! They are not heirs of heaven, but heirs of God himself; they have him for their portion, and exceeding great reward. 2. They are heirs with Christ; as Christ is God's heir, so are they heirs with Christ; Christ is God's heir by nature, as he is the Son of God by nature, whatever is God's is his; and they are heirs with Christ; they are members of

him, and shall be heirs with him, 1 Cor. iii. ult. All is yours, and ye are Christ's, Eph. i. 11. In him we have obtained the inheritance; we are heirs in his right. O blessed Jesus! how endearing are our obligations to thee! All that we have is from thee, by thee, and in thee: we are chosen in thee, justified by thee, sanctified through thee, and shall be glorified with thee: *For if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*. It follows,

—If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Here we see what accompanieth our adoption, namely, present affliction; we are now to suffer, but not alone, we suffer with Christ; *If so be that we suffer with him*. This *if* is not a word of ambiguity and doubting, but a word of certainty and assurance, and signifies as much as, seeing that we suffer with him. Learn hence, 1. That a state of suffering and affliction on earth is one condition of obtaining our glorious inheritance in heaven; we must suffer, that God may be glorified, our graces improved, our love to the world mortified, our longings for heaven increased. Learn, 2. That the sufferings of believers are the sufferings of Christ; they suffer with him, and he with them: they suffer with him in a way of conformity, he with them in a way of tender sympathy; they are sensible of any indignity offered to him, and he is sensible of any injury offered to them; the suffering saint pledges Christ in his own cup. Farther, they suffer with him, when they suffer for him, when they suffer in his cause, and for his sake, that is, for doing their duty. Finally, they suffer with him, when they suffer by an assistance derived from him, when by his enablement, and by a power communicated from him, they suffer hard things for his name and truth. Learn, 3. That as sufferings go before glory, so glory shall certainly follow sufferings: *If we suffer with him, we shall be also glorified together*. Suffering is the beaten path to glory, and that which makes it so much the more glorious; suffering fits us for glory, and disposes us for the reception and fruition of it; by the cross we are fitted for the crown. Learn, 4. The suffering members shall not only be glorified, but be conformable to their glorified head in glory; as they have here *suffered with him*, they shall hereafter *be glorified together*, not with equal glory, but with the same kind of glory. Three things are implied in our being glorified together with Christ: 1. Conformity: we shall be like him in glory. 2. Concomitancy: we shall accom-

pany him, and be present with him in glory. 3. Conveyance or derivation: we shall be glorified with him; that is, our glory shall be derived from him; his glory shall be reflected upon us, and we shall shine in his beams. O happy condition of God's adopted and afflicted children! The supports which you have under suffering, the comfort which you have in suffering, the benefits which you have by suffering, and the glory which will follow after suffering, render it not only tolerable but desirable; well may they glory in tribulation, which expect such glory after it.

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Observe here, 1. The nature and property of the saints' present sufferings: they are short and momentary, *the sufferings of this present time*. If sharp, they shall yet be short; though great, they cannot be long; for their afflictions cannot last longer than their lives; the one shall end when the other ends. O blessed condition of the righteous! your afflictions are only for the present time, the grave will set you beyond the reach of trouble. Ah, wretched condition of the wicked! your sufferings are not only *for this present time*, but for eternal ages; your worm will never die, your fire never be quenched, but you shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Observe, 2. The nature and property of the saints' future glory: 'tis hidden, *'tis a glory that shall be revealed*. Learn hence, That the glory which God has prepared for his suffering saints and children, is an hidden glory; for it is hidden from the eye of the world, and lies altogether out of their sight and view, and it is in a great measure hidden from the saints themselves; it is now the object of their faith, but ere long it shall be the object of their sight. Observe, 3. The vast disproportion between the Christian's present suffering, and his future glory and happiness: the one is not worthy to be compared with the other: *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed*. Learn hence, That the weight of the saints' cross is not comparable with the glory of their crown; the happiness of their future glorified state doth infinitely outweigh the misery of their present afflicted state, they are not to be named in the same day. Observe, 4. The apostle's judgment or determination about this matter: *I reckon*. "I have cast up the matter," as if the apostle had said, "and have had

my share of sufferings; but I make light of them, they are not worth speaking of, compared with the glory I shall receive as the reward of my sufferings." Learn hence, That such of the saints of God as have been exercised and tried with the heaviest sufferings, make lightest of them, having the highest account of heaven's glory: *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory, &c.*

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

Observe here, 1. That there is a time indeed a-coming, when all the sons of God, all his adopted children, shall be made manifest. How manifest? 1. In their persons: It shall then appear who are God's sons, and who are Satan's servants; they shall then be made manifest to themselves, to one another; yea, to the very consciences of the wicked. 2. In their actions, 1 Cor. iii. 13. Every man's work shall be made manifest of what nature it is, what they have done, whose interest they were in. 3. In their condition, their glory and happiness shall be made manifest: *When Christ their life shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory*. Observe, 2. That the creature, or whole creation, expecteth, waiteth, and longeth, for the time of this manifestation. Some by the *creature*, and the *whole creation*, here understand the Gentile world; and then the sense is, "That the heathens shall, by the preaching of the gospel, be rescued from their idolatry, unto which they have been long enslaved, and be brought into the glorious condition of Christ's redeemed ones, to whom the glorious inheritance of heaven doth belong." But others, by the *creature*, and the *whole creation*, understand this miserable world, sensitive and rational, animate and inanimate; and then the sense is, "That the whole frame and course of the creation is so ordered and disposed of by God, as that it carries in it a vehement desire and earnest longing for the full manifestation of God's glory in and towards his children." Observe, 3. The pre

sent condition which the creature is subjected to through the sin of man, *it is made subject to vanity*; that is, to corruption and mortality, to servitude and servility: the sin of man did not only stain the glory of man, but marred and spoiled the beauty of the whole creation; all creatures are fallen from the first perfection by the fall of our first parents. Observe, 4. The restlessness and uneasiness of the creature under this vanity and servility: it groans like a man under a burden, or like a travelling woman in labour. Learn hence, That the sin of man is burdensome to the senseless creature: it is in continual labour to serve man's necessity; it is oft-times punished together with man for the sin of man; witness the old world and Sodom; and as they are oft-times constrained and compelled by men to serve the lusts of men, thus the whole creation groaneth under the burden of man's sin, when he himself groans not: and accordingly the groans of the creature are upbraiding groans, they upbraid our stupidity and unthankfulness; they are accusing groans, as they will witness against us at the bar of God; they are awakening groans, to excite and stir us up to sigh and long for a better state; and they are instructive groans, to teach us our sins, and their vanity. 5. The expectation which the creature is under of a state of liberty and freedom from the vanity and corruption which they are now subject to for our sin: it has an *earnest expectation* of being delivered from this bondage. But how can the senseless and inanimate part of the creation be said to have an *earnest expectation*? Not properly, as if the creature was able to put forth such an act directly; for then it must be supposed to have not only life and sense, but reason and grace: but the meaning is, That there is a vehement inclination in the creature to be restored to that first condition which it was in before the fall; and accordingly it is said to *wait for the manifestation of the sons of God*; that is, for that liberty and freedom from servility and corruption, which, according to their capacity, the creatures hope for and expect, when the full privileges and dignities of the sons of God shall be manifested. Observe lastly, That the liberty which God's children are reserved for, and appointed to, is a glorious liberty; that is, a liberty which shall be attended with unspeakable glory: *The creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits

of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

And not only they; that is, all the creatures in the visible creation, join in this, they groan together; they do not some groan, and others sing; some travail in pain, and others in pleasure. But they all groan and travail together in pain until now, that is, until the glorious manifestation of the sons of God; but not only do they groan, but we ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, &c. Observe here, 1. A special description of God's adopted children; they have the first-fruits of the Spirit; that is, they have the Holy Spirit in its sanctifying gifts, and graces, and comforts, in some measure; called here first-fruits, because of the smallness of their quantity. The first-fruits were but an handful, a little portion in comparison of the whole crop; yet was it an evidence and pledge that God would give them the full crop. Thus grace is an earnest of glory, it is a pledge of everlasting life; the beginnings of grace here are certain forerunners of the accomplishment of glory hereafter. Observe, 2. The actions attributed to the fore-mentioned persons: they groan, they wait. 1. They groan, *We who have the first-fruits of the Spirit do groan*; they groan under the burden of sin and affliction: the guilt of sin, the pollution of sin, the sad remains of indwelling sin, make them groan; their proneness and inclination to evil, their backwardness and indisposition to good, make them groan; their too frequent backslidings, their daily infirmities make them groan; their sufferings also from God, and from man for God's sake, cause them to groan; but it is added, *We groan within ourselves*; that is, secretly to ourselves, undiscerned by the world, and in a manner peculiar to ourselves, as persons influenced by religion and grace: as Christians have joys and comforts, so have they griefs and groans, peculiar to themselves. 2. They wait: but for what? 1. For the adoption, that is, for the completing of their adoption, for the last finishing stroke in their sanctification, and for their perfect glorification. 2. For the redemption of their bodies; that is, for their resurrection, for their redemption from mortality and corruption, for the redemption of their whole man, soul and body, do believers wait: their bodies were members of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, instruments of and companions with the soul in holy duties; and accordingly the hour is com-

ing when the complete redemption both of soul and body shall be fully and finally perfected; but in the mean time they groan and wait for it. Learn from the whole, That all sanctified Christians, who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, do groan and wait for a much better state than what they do at present enjoy.

24 For we are saved by hope : but hope that is seen is not hope : for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for ? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for it.

We are saved by hope ; that is, we are at present supported by hope, our present expectation of our future glorious condition beareth up our spirit under its sufferings, and carrieth us joyfully through all difficulties : or, *We are saved by hope* ; that is, all the salvation which we have at present is in hope, not in hand ; in expectation, not in possession ; heaven in hope is more worth than the whole world in hand ; and seeing there is a certainty of hope, there is also of salvation : *We are saved by hope*. Observe next, The nature of hope declared : 'tis an expectation of good things promised, but not enjoyed ; vision and fruition put an end to hope ; none hopes for that he already enjoys. Hope is conversant about things unseen, as well as faith : Faith is the evidence of things not seen, and hope is the expectation of those things : The object of hope is a future good, a possible good, a promised good, a good promised by God, and believed by us. Observe lastly, The necessary adjunct and the inseparable companion of hope ; and that is patience, and waiting for the good hoped for : *If we hope, &c., then do we with patience wait, &c.* Learn hence, That they only hope for eternal life aright, who continue in the pursuit of it with patience and perseverance : there must be found with us a waiting patience, a working patience, a bearing and forbearing patience, with a persevering continuance in well-doing, if we hope for glory, immortality, and eternal life.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Learn hence, 1. That the holiest and best of saints labour oft-times under great infirmities in the work and duty of prayer, not knowing what to pray for, or how

to manage that important affair as they ought. Hence it was that the apostles themselves, being sensible of their own disability in this kind, made their addresses to Christ himself to teach and instruct them how to pray. *Luke xi. 1.* Learn, 2. That it is the work and office of the Holy Spirit of God to help our infirmities in prayer, or, as the word signifies, to help together with us, to set his shoulder to ours, and lift with us at the same burden : the Spirit of Christ and our own spirit must both do their part in carrying on this work ; if ever we expect the Spirit's assistance, we must exert our own endeavours. More particularly ; the Spirit helps us in prayer, by working in us a deep sense of our spiritual wants, by giving us an insight into the promises, and enabling us to plead them at the throne of grace, by creating and stirring up desires in our souls to have our wants supplied by encouraging and emboldening us to come to God in prayer as to a father, with an humble reverence and child-like confidence. But though the Holy Spirit be our guide and assistant in this duty, yet not so as to give us occasion to think that the words of prayer are immediately inspired and dictated to us by the Holy Ghost : let us have a care that we mistake not an idle and foolish loquacity, a frothy eloquence and affected language, outward vehemency and boldness of speech, a natural fervency, or an acquired fluency of expression, for the Spirit's help and assistance in prayer. Implore the Spirit's help, and he will help thy infirmities : he will show thee thy sins, to give thee matter of confession ; he will show thee thy wants, to give thee matter of petition ; he will show thee the mercies and blessings of God, to yield thee matter of thanksgiving ; he will show thee the church's miseries and necessities, to furnish thee with matter of intercession. Thus the Spirit will assist thee, but never expect that he should act without thee. Learn, 3. What is the proper work and office of the Holy Spirit in prayer : it is to make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. But how is the Spirit our intercessor ! Is not that Christ's office ! *Ans.* Christ is an intercessor for us, the Holy Spirit is an intercessor in us. Christ, in respect of his meritorious sufferings, is an advocate, mediator, and intercessor with the Father for us. The Holy Spirit intercedes in us, by enabling us for, and assisting us in, the duty ; by quickening our affections, and enlarging our desires ; by setting us a-groaning after the Lord. Groaning notes the strength and ardency of desire, which through the fervency of

it puts the soul to pain, and an holy impatience till it be heard. Lord, how flat and dead are our hearts sometimes in prayer! How much are our spirits straitened! But, if we want words, let us not want groans; let thy Spirit help us to groan out a prayer, when we want ability to utter it; for silent groans proceeding from thy Spirit shall be heard in thine ears, when the loudest cries shall not be heard without it.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Observe here, 1. The title or attribute given and appropriated unto God: *He searcheth, or knoweth, the heart.* He was the maker of the heart, and is the disposer of the heart, and will judge every man according to his heart; and therefore he must know the heart thoroughly and perfectly, certainly and infallibly; and it is the joy of an upright person, that God knoweth and searcheth the heart. When the world condemns him for insincerity, he rejoiceth that God knoweth his integrity; and when he has it in the purpose of his heart to do good, but wants power in his hand to accomplish and effect it, this is his consolation, That God accepts as done, what he did desire and resolve to do, *2 Chron. vi. 8.* Observe, 2. The action here attributed to the heart-searching God: *he knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit;* that is, he knoweth the workings of the Holy Spirit, and of our own spirits also, in the duty of prayer. It is a great comfort to the children of God, that the Lord knoweth what kind of spirit is working in their hearts, when they are before him upon their knees. Do we labour under difficulty of utterance in prayer? Are we attended with distractions in prayer? Do we at any time forget and leave out in prayer what we intended to put into it? The Lord knoweth what is the mind of our spirits in that matter. God doth not only hear his people's prayers, but he hears their desires: and grants not only the desires of our lips, but the desires of our hearts, which have not been expressed by our lips. Observe, 3. Who the persons are whom the Holy Spirit intercedes for in prayer: they are saints, *He maketh intercession for the saints;* for them exclusively, and none but them; for them inclusively, for all and every one of them: the Spirit sanctifies all those in whom and for whom he intercedes: he is first a spirit of regeneration, before he is a spirit of intercession; he first puts gracious dispositions

into us, and then stirs up holy desires in us. Observe, 4. The qualification necessary to render our prayers acceptable to God, they must be according to God; that is, *according to the will and mind of God.* And that, 1. In respect of the matter of them: we must pray only for things lawful and warrantable. 2. In regard of the manner of them: we must pray in faith, with fervency, and in the name of Christ. 3. In respect of the end of them, and what we propound to ourselves in them; which is, the glory of God. Notwithstanding Christ's mediation, and the Spirit's intercession, we may ask, and not receive, if we ask amiss; that is, for bad ends, that we may consume it upon our lusts.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

That is, "All dispensations of providence whatsoever, whether they be ordinary afflictions, or extraordinary trials, which do befall the children of God in this life, shall certainly be directed by his wisdom, and overruled by his power and goodness, for the temporal, spiritual, and eternal good of his children and people. Observe here, 1. What those things are, which are especially intended in that comprehensive term, *All things.* By *all things* here, we are to understand, *Omnia tristia, non Omnia turpia;* "All the saints' afflictions, not their sins;" for then they might rejoice in their sins and wickedness, which is damnable impiety, as well as in their sufferings for Christ, seeing they may rejoice in that which by God's designation tendeth to their good. But by *all things*, the apostle means all providential occurrences and dispensations, all stations and conditions whatsoever; be it prosperity or adversity, health or sickness, liberty or captivity, life or death, God's glory and his children's good shall be certainly furthered and advanced by it. Observe, 2. In what sense *all things* may be said to work for good to good men; namely, as they shall promote and further the temporal, spiritual, and eternal welfare, of the children of God. If it be good for them to be rich, to be in honour, to be at liberty, they shall be so; if it be better for their souls, and more conducive to their eternal welfare, to be low in the world, to be frequently under the rod, to be harassed with afflictions, and assaulted with temptations, they shall have them. Nothing that is needful shall be kept from them, only God must be judge what is needful, and when 'tis needful. He that thinks he can cut better for himself

than God can carve for him; makes himself wiser than God, and has not only lost his faith, but his wits too. Observe, 3. That *all things* are said to *work together* for good; not singly, separately, and apart, but as coadjutors, and adjuvant causes, and mutual helps. Afflictions and temptations seem to work against us; but being put into the rank and order of causes, they work together with other blessed instruments, as the word and prayer, to an happy issue. More particularly: they work together with God, they work together with us, and they work together one with another, for our good, sooner or later. Observe, 4. How can *all things* be said to *work for good*: particularly evil things! sufferings from God, and sufferings from man for God's sake? What! must we call evil good? pain pleasure? torment ease! and loss gain? Must we disbelieve our senses that we may believe the scriptures? *Answer*, Though affliction, which is evil in its own nature, cannot bring forth good; yet surely God can bring forth good out of evil, light out of darkness, and make his people's troubles the way to their triumph, and every cross providence a step to the accomplishment of his promise. God suffers evil things to befall us, to keep out worse things, and cause evil things to prepare us for better things; the cross makes way for the crown. For affliction, there is glory; for light affliction, a weight of glory; and for light affliction, which is but for a moment, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Observe, 5. The character of the persons to whom this privilege doth belong: they are described by their Christian affection, they *love God*, and by their effectual vocation, they are *called according to his purpose*. They love God, and evidence their love to him by an high estimation of him, by their delight in him, by their desires after him, by their longings for the full fruition and final enjoyment of him. And as they love God, so are they called of God; externally by the dispensation of the gospel, internally by the operation of his Holy Spirit: they are called out of darkness into light, out of bondage into liberty, and all this efficaciously and powerfully, yet sweetly, and freely, in a way congruous to the will's liberty. Observe, 6. The certainty and evidence of this proposition and assertion, *That all things work together for good*; it is not built upon conjecture, or bare probability, but upon certain knowledge, *We know*; partly by divine revelation, God has told us so; partly by experience, we find it so. And when the apostle speaks it out, *We know*,

it is a word of confidence and assurance, it is a word of comfort and encouragement: all the saints of God to the end of the world, as well as the apostle himself, may depend upon it, live in the faith and assurance of it, and draw all that consolation from it, which may render their lives in some sort an heaven upon earth. And now if this be an indubitable and undeniable truth, That whatever sufferings and afflictions a saint meets with shall work together for good; then we may infer, that a suffering condition is not so bad a condition as the world supposes it. The lion of affliction is not so fierce as he is painted. Times of difficulty and trial bring serious thoughts of God into our minds, who are too prone to forget both him and ourselves in affluence and quiet. Blessed be God, the time of affliction is no unprofitable time, nor uncomfortable time neither. 'Tis a thinking time, an awakening time, a teaching time, a repenting time, a weaning time; therefore blessed is the man whom God correcteth and teacheth.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. 30 Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

St. Paul in these verses lays before us a chain of the causes of salvation inseparably linked together, the first of which was before all time, namely, God's foreknowledge of us from all eternity, and his predestinating or appointing of us to eternal life: *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate*. But what were we predestinated unto? He tells us in the next words, *To be conformed to the image of his Son*; that is, to be made like unto our Lord Jesus in affection and disposition, in life and conversation, in the temper of our minds, and in the actions of our lives; like unto him in his sufferings, in the cause of his sufferings, righteousness-sake, and well-doing; in the kind of his sufferings, reproach, hatred, outward violence, and death itself; and in the manner of his sufferings with meekness and patience: and like unto him in his glory, suffering with him, we shall be glorified together. The second privilege we are partakers of is in time, namely, effectual vocation: *Whom he did predestinate, them he also called*. They are called out of a state of ignorance and darkness, of sin and wickedness, of

slavery and bondage, unto knowledge, grace, and holiness; and the Holy Spirit of God inclines and enables them to obey this call. The third privilege is justification: *Whom he called, them he also justified*; that is, absolved from guilt, and freed from condemnation, discharging them from their obnoxiousness to wrath, and the severity of divine displeasure. The last privilege we are partakers of in after-time, namely, glorification: *Whom he justified, them he also glorified*. They are already glorified in Christ their head, they have already the earnest and first-fruits of glory, namely, the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, and they shall ere long partake of the same glory which Christ himself is in the possession of; John xvii. *Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me, where I am, to behold my glory*. But it may be said, that one link is wanting in the golden chain of salvation, namely, sanctification. No mention is here made of that. *Ans.* Some conceive that sanctification is couched in effectual vocation: others, that it is included in glorification: for sanctification is *Gloria inchoata*, glorification is *Gratia consummata*. Grace is the lowest degree of glory, and glory is the highest degree of grace. Others answer, That the apostle makes no mention here of sanctification, for this reason, because he was setting down here the causes of salvation. Now sanctification being the way to salvation, but not the cause of it, the apostle mentions not that here; though elsewhere he sufficiently shows, that none are now justified, or can be hereafter glorified, that are not here sanctified and renewed. From the whole learn, 1. That there were certain persons before all time chosen of God to possess and inherit eternal life. 2. That God's design in choosing them was to render them conformable to Christ in his holiness, in his sufferings, and in his glory. 3. That those whom God chooseth before time, he calleth, justifieth, and sanctifieth, in time, and will finally glorify when time shall be no more.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us:

What shall we say to these things? that is, to the fore-named truth and doctrines, to the fore-mentioned privileges and benefits, what comfort doth arise from them? How shall we live up answerable to them? Neither the tongue of men or angels is sufficient to declare the comprehensive fulness of the foregoing favour of vocation and justification here, and glorification in heaven. Such love and goodness are beyond ex-

pression; it is as much as if the apostle had thus said, 'What boundless love did our God move! no tongue can it express:—No angel can this mystery scan, nor tell our happiness.' *What shall we say to these things?* It follows, *If God be for us, who can be against us?* That is, seeing God is for us, who can safely and successfully be against us? Learn hence, 1. That at all times, especially in the time of affliction and distress, danger and difficulty, God ever has been, and will be, on his people's side. 2. That those whom God is for, and on whose side he is of, need not fear either how many or how mighty they be that are against them. God is for his people; that is, he approves and owns them, he assists and helps them, he will succeed and bless them, reward and crown them. Who then can be against them rationally, against them successfully, against them safely? How dangerous is it to be against those whom God is for! *If God is for us, who can be against us?* And if God be against us, who can be for us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Here we have, 1. A proposition laid down, containing matter of the highest consolation to us; namely, that God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. *He spared not*: that is, he did not spare to give him, or part with him; with Abraham, he did not withhold his Son, his only Son, from us. Again, *He did not spare him*: that is, he did not spare to punish him; he did not abate him one farthing, nor spare him one stroke, which divine justice did or could demand. It is farther added, that *God delivered him for us all*. Judas delivered up Christ, Pilate delivered him up, and the Jews also; Judas for money, Pilate for fear, the Jews for envy; but none of these delivered him up for us. But God the Father delivered up his Son, and God the Son delivered up himself, as a prisoner by the sentence of the law is delivered up to execution; and his being delivered up for us, denotes the vicegerency of his sufferings, not only for our good as the final cause, but for our sin as the meritorious cause, in our room, place, and stead. Learn hence, That the utmost rigour and severity of divine justice was inflicted and executed upon our Lord Jesus Christ in the day of his passion, and that by the pleasure and appointment of God the Father: *He spared not, but delivered up his own Son*. Observe, 2. The comfortable inference and conclusion which the apostle draws from

the foregoing proposition: *How shall he not with him freely give us all things?* Intimating, that the greatest mercies and best of blessings shall not be denied to us, or withheld from us. If Christ be ours, 1 Cor. ii. 21. All things are yours, (that is, all spiritual, temporal, and eternal mercies,) and ye are Christ's. For, 1. No other mercy can be so dear to God as his own Son: he was his soul's delight. If therefore he spared not the most excellent mercy, he will not withhold any inferior mercy. 2. There is no other mercy we want, but we are entitled to it by the gift of Christ, and it is conveyed to us with Christ; all things (as to right) are ours, if we be his. 3. If God gave us his Son, when we were his enemies, certainly he will deny us nothing that is good for us, now we are reconciled and made friends. It is our apostle's argument, Rom. v. 9. *If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is God that justifieth.*

Observe here, 1. The apostle's confident and daring challenge; *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* Where note, The universality of the challenge; it is universal in a double respect, 1. In respect of persons accusing, *Who shall?* He expects none in heaven, none in earth; nay, none in hell; neither sin, nor the law, nor Satan, nor conscience, having any thing to lay to our charge, in order to our condemnation. 2. In respect of crimes, he expects no sort of sins, though never so heinously aggravated, and sadly circumstantiated: justifying grace is their full discharge. Learn hence, That it is impossible for any charge or accusation to take place against those whom God doth justify, because there is nothing to accuse them of, none to accuse them to, and nobody to frame or make the accusation against them. Well might the apostle say, Who can, who shall, who may, who dare, lay any thing to the justified person's charge? Observe, 2. The ground and reason of this confident challenge: it is God that justifieth; who shall condemn? Here note, 1. That there is a very gracious privilege vouchsafed to believers, which the scriptures call justification. 2. That it is God that justifieth the believer's person, and pardons his sins, and none but God; he is the person against whom the offence is committed, and he alone it is that absolves us from guilt contracted. When the justice of God accuses, when

the law of God accuses, when our own conscience accuses, when Satan and wicked men accuse; the mercy and goodness, the truth and faithfulness of God, will for the sake of his Son's satisfaction, acquit and discharge us: *for it is God that justifieth.*

34 Who is he that condemneth? *It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

The apostle here goes on with the triumphant challenge in the foregoing verse begun. Who shall condemn the justified believer? And here observe, 1. The holy challenge of faith; it is ready for all comers, and bids defiance to all accusations. If the law implead, faith says, Christ, in the likeness of sinful flesh, has condemned sin in the flesh. If death looks the believer in the face, faith saith, Christ hath abolished death, brought life and immortality to light. If Satan roar, faith can scorn, and tell him to his teeth, he is a conquered enemy; that Christ by his death has destroyed him that had the power of death. Yea, if God himself frown upon the believer, faith can bring to God a righteousness that is highly pleasing to him, with respect to which *God may be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* Observe, 2. The ground of this triumphant challenge which faith enables the believer to make; and that is, the mediation of Jesus Christ, in the four eminent branches of it, his death, resurrection, exaltation, and intercession. *Christ died, is risen again, is even at God's right hand, making continual intercession for us.* Thence learn, That a believer's triumphs over condemnation do eminently arise from the several acts of Christ's mediation. Christ died and rose again; our debt is therefore paid, because our surety is discharged; he sits at God's right hand as a testimony of the completeness of his sacrifice and satisfaction for us, and he continually intercedes, that is, presents himself to his Father in both natures, and in our names, as our Surety, our Advocate, and Mediator: *Who then shall lay any thing to the believer's charge, or who shall condemn him?*

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

That is, none shall separate, nothing shall separate, the believer from the love of Christ; either from the love that Christ

bears to him, or from that love which he bears unto Christ; no person shall, no condition of life can, separate them, neither outward troubles, nor inward distresses, no evils either felt or feared; the apostle defies and despises them all, because neither of them alone, nor all together, can unclasp the arms of divine love, in which believers are safely enfolded. Learn hence, That no troubles, tribulations, or distresses whatsoever, can dissolve the union betwixt Christ and believers, or ever separate them from his love.

36 (As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.)

As if the apostle had said, "The saints of old have endured all manner of sufferings, and yet were not separated from the love of God; therefore the like or worse sufferings, shall not be able to separate us now." Here note, What may be the lot and portion of believers in this life, and that is, killing for the sake of Christ: *For thy sake we are killed all the day long.* These words, *all the day long*, denote the continuance of the persecution, the unweariedness of the enemy, and the patience of the saints. Learn hence, That such as resolve upon the profession of Christianity must prepare for killing, if God requires, and be ready to lay down their lives for their religion, when God calls: *For thy sake we are killed*, that is, ready to be sacrificed; a readiness of disposition, and a preparation of mind, is found with us, to part with all that is dear unto us, even life itself, for the sake of Christ.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.

As if the apostle had said, "We are so far from being separated from Christ by the afflictions and persecutions which we undergo, that we are conquerors by our patience, nay, more than conquerors; we do not only bear our trials, but we glory in tribulations: we conquer by our patience, we are more than conquerors by our cheerfulness." But because these words, *more than conquerors*, look big and sound great, the apostle instantly subjoins, that 'tis by Christ's strength, and not by our own, that we overcome and conquer. *More than conquerors* through him that loved us; which words are a *periphrasis* of Christ: it is both a proper description of him, and a comprehensive description. When the apostle said, *He that loved us*, he doth in effect say every thing else; he that was

born for us, that died for us, that redeemed and saved us, all these were the effects and fruits of his love; and they all are comprehended in this saying, *Him that loved us*. Note lastly, How the believer is said to overcome by the help of this person; *More than conquerors through him that loved us*. Whence learn, That all a Christian's strength lies in Christ, and not in himself: all his strength for victory over sin, all his strength for victory over suffering, is all received from Christ, is all to be attributed and ascribed to Christ; the strength of every saint, yea, the whole host of saints, lies in the Lord of hosts.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our apostle concludes this excellent chapter with triumphant expressions, as he had begun it: in the first verse he proclaims that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; here in the last verse he pronounces, that nothing shall separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus: *I am persuaded, &c.* Where observe, 1. The proposition positively laid down: nothing shall separate from the love of Christ; his love is like himself, unchangeable and everlasting; he ever loves the same person, and ever loves for the same reason. Likeness is the ground of love, the attractive and loadstone of it: now the image of Christ, by the Spirit of Christ, is both preserved and increased in the believer's soul; this engages the heart of Christ towards Christians in such a manner that nothing shall separate them from his love. Observe, 2. The enumeration and induction of particulars which the apostle makes use of for confirming this proposition, that nothing can separate the believer from the love of Christ, nor diminish his interest in him. *Neither life, nor death*; that is, neither the hope of life, nor the fear of death. *Nor angels*, neither good nor bad: not the good angels, for they will not attempt it; nor the bad angels, for they can never effect it. *Nor principalities, nor powers*; by them understand earthly powers, the great and mighty potentates of the world persecuting us for Christ, yet shall never be able to divorce us from him. *Nor things present, nor things to come*; neither the things which we enjoy at present, or endure at present,

or may hereafter meet with, be it prosperity and adversity; their present and future condition of life shall be sanctified, whatever comes; come what may come, come what will come, come what can come, nothing shall come amiss unto them; whatever has happened, does happen, or may happen to them in this world, shall not frustrate their hopes of future happiness in the world to come. *Nor height, nor depth*: that is, neither height of honour, nor depth of ignominy; neither the top of worldly advancement, nor the bottom of worldly debasement; neither the height of spiritual enlargement, nor the depth of spiritual desolutions. God can and will keep his saints in an honourable, in a comfortable, yea, in a safe state and condition, all at once. *Nor any other creature*: that is, if there be any other creature not comprehended or comprised in the foregoing enumeration, whatever it be, it must fall under the rank and denomination of creatures; and no creature either in heaven, or in earth, or in hell, shall separate Christ and us. Learn hence, That it is matter of unutterable consolation, and inexpressible triumph to believers, that nothing, though never so great and powerful, though never so amiable or terrible, shall be able to separate them from the love of their Saviour. Blessed be God, our standing in Christ is not so lubricious and slippery as it was in Adam: he might stand or might fall; the believer shall stand, the root bears up the branches; we shall be kept by the mighty power of God, with the concurrence of our own careful and continual endeavours, through faith unto salvation. Observe, 3. The full assurance which the apostle had of the stability of a believer's estate: *I am persuaded*, or *I am fully assured*. But how so? Not by extraordinary and special revelation, not by rapture into heaven, not by the apparition of an angel to him; but his assurance is, built on that which is common to all believers; namely, the same spirit of faith, and the same love of God shed abroad in the hearts of all believers. Observe, 4. How the apostle, having spoken in his own person in the former verse, saying, *I am persuaded*, changes the number in the last verse; nothing shall separate *us*, not *me*. Where note, How he associates himself with all true believers in the participation of this privilege: they have all an interest in the same love of God, the same promises of salvation, and have felt the sanctifying work of the same Spirit. It is impossible that God should retract his merciful purpose to save believers; he that chose them from eternity, from before all

time, and gave his Son to suffer death for them in the fulness of time, will persevere in his purpose; namely, by grace to bring them to glory. He whose grace prevented them when they were in their pollutions, in a state of enmity, yea, in a state of obstinacy, will he leave them after his image is engraven, and re-instamped upon them? He that united them to Christ when they were strangers, will not cast them out of his love now they are his members: their Intercessor will preserve them from falling, and present them faultless before the presence of his Father's glory with exceeding joy. God's love unto his children is everlasting, and the covenant that is built upon it is more firm than the pillars of heaven, and the foundations of the earth; well might the apostle then say, Nothing shall separate *us* from the love of God. Observe, 5. and lastly, The ground of this love's permanency and duration towards believers: it is the love of God in Christ Jesus that is vouchsafed to us for the sake of Christ Jesus. God looks upon Christ, and loves him, and them in him; he loves all that are members of him, all that are like unto him. O blessed Jesus! it is for thy sake that the Father smiles upon us; we are chosen in thee, justified through thee, sanctified by thee, and shall be eternally glorified with thee; *for neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature whatsoever, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. Eternal thanks to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the consolation that flows from hence! May so high and glorious a privilege oblige all that are interested in it to the exercise of universal holiness, remembering, that as the privileges of the gospel are glorious and great, so the duties it requires are exact and strict; if we would enjoy the consolation in the last verse of this chapter, (here dilated upon,) we must perform the duty in the first verse, (there insisted on,) namely, to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; otherwise the privilege of non-condemnation there, and of no separation from the love of God in Christ Jesus here, will neither belong to us, or ever be enjoyed and improved by us.

CHAP. IX.

Our apostle in this and the two following chapters labours mightily to convince his countrymen the Jews, of their obstinacy against God in rejecting his counsel concerning their justification by faith in Christ: and that this obstinacy of theirs was the certain cause of their rejection, or casting out of the favour of God, and of the calling of the Gentiles; that is, of investing the Gen-

titles with the privileges of the abdicated Jews. And because he foresaw that this doctrine of the rejection of the Jews, and calling of the Gentiles, would be looked upon as a hard saying, and be marvellously offensive and displeasing, he begins this chapter with a most solemn protestation, that what he said did not proceed from the least disaffection towards them, much less from an exultated prejudice against them; but calls Christ and the Holy Ghost to witness, that he spoke the truth impartially, and did not lie. For thus he says: —

I SAY the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's solemn asseveration or oath: he calls Christ and the Holy Ghost to witness for the truth of what he says; which is the very formality of an oath. Learn thence, That it is not barely lawful, but in some cases expedient and necessary, to assert and confirm by oath the truth and certainty of what we speak; in cases of great moment, which cannot otherwise be sufficiently confirmed, a Christian may establish his saying by an oath. Observe, 2. The persons whom the apostle swears by, *Christ and the Holy Ghost*; he calls them to be witnesses of the sincerity of his conscience in what he doth assert: *I say the truth in Christ, &c.* But why doth the apostle swear by the name of Christ, and not rather by the name of God, seeing the Jews did not believe his divinity, and so were not like to give any whit the more credit to what was attested by him? I answer, Probably to assert the Godhead of Christ, which the Jews generally denied, and therefore wanted that honour which was and is due unto it. None but God was to be sworn by; the apostle swearing by Christ, proves him to be truly and really God, as also the Holy Ghost; for an oath being an act of religious worship, and the apostle swearing by Christ and the Holy Ghost, doth thereby acknowledge their divinity, according to the words of Moses in Deut. vi. 13. *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shall swear by his name.* Observe, 3. As the apostle appeals to Christ and the Holy Ghost, so also to his own conscience, as the avoucher and witness of the truth of what he says, *My conscience also bearing me witness.* Learn thence, That God has placed a conscience in every man, whose office it is to bear witness of all his words and actions; yea, of all his thoughts and inward affections. Conscience is God's register, to record whatever we think, speak, or act; and happy he whose conscience bears witness for him, and doth not testify against him: who can say with the apostle here, *My conscience beareth me*

witness, that I lie not, but say the truth in Christ.

2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

The original word signifies such sorrow as is found with women in travail; a sorrow continually affecting his heart, and afflicting his spirit for his countrymen and kinsmen the Jews, upon the account of their obstinate infidelity, obduration of heart, and spirit of slumber which was fallen upon them, which had provoked God to resolve to cast them off, to reject their nation, and to scatter them up and down throughout the world. Behold here, 1. What are the dismal effects and dreadful consequences of obstinate unbelief, under the offers of Christ tendered to persons in and by the dispensation of the gospel: without timely repentance, the issue will be final rejection, inevitable condemnation, unutterable loss. Behold, 2. The true spirit of Christianity; it puts men upon mourning for the sins and calamities of others in a very sensible and affectionate manner. Good men ever have been, and are, men of tender and compassionate dispositions; a stoical apathy, an indolence of heart, or want of natural affection, is so far from being a virtue, or matter of just commendation unto any man, that the deepest sorrow and heaviness of soul, in some cases, well becomes persons of the greatest piety and wisdom. Learn, 3. That great sorrow and continual heaviness of heart for the miseries of others, whether imminent or incumbent, but especially for the sins of others, is an undoubted argument, sign, and evidence of a strong and vehement love towards them. The apostle's *great heaviness and continual sorrow* for the Jews, his brethren, was a great instance and evidence of his unfeigned love and affection to them.

3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

That is, "So great is my concern for the salvation of my brethren the Jews, that I could undergo the greatest misery and evil that can befall myself, to prevent their destruction." This wish of St. Paul is plainly an hyperbolical expression of his great affection to his countrymen the Jews, and his zeal for their salvation, which was so intense and vehement, that were it a thing reasonable and lawful, were it proper, and could avail to the procuring their salvation, he could have wished the great-

est evil to himself; for their sakes, not only to be excommunicated from communion with the church of Christ, but to be separated from Christ himself. If it be said, that such a wish is sinful and unnatural, to desire the salvation of others with our own damnation; I answer, True; and therefore the apostle's words are not an absolute and positive wish. He does not say, *I wish*; but *I could wish*; just as we are wont to say, when we would express a thing to the height, which is not fit nor intended to be done by us, "*I could wish so and so*; *I could even be content to do this or that.*" Which kind of expressions no man takes for a strict and precise declaration of our minds, but for a figurative expression of a very great and vehement passion. Thus here the apostle says not, *I wish*, but *I could even wish*: were it proper to make such a wish, I could even wish so great a blessing to my brethren, though with the loss of my own happiness. Hence learn, 1. That it is neither lawful nor reasonable for any man to renounce his own eternal salvation, and to be willing to be damned upon any account whatsoever, be it for the good of his brethren, or for the glory of God himself.—The very thought of such a thing is enough to make human nature tremble at its very foundation: for the desire of our own happiness is the deepest principle that God has planted in our natures: and to pretend a reason from the glory of God, is impossible; because our damnation cannot make for the glory of God, unless by our own impotency and wilful obstinacy we have deserved damnation. Learn, 2. That such may be the ardency of a saint's affection towards others, and so fervent his desires for their conversion and salvation, that he may be willing to sacrifice himself, and all that is dear unto him in this world, for the accomplishing of that end: *I could wish that I were accursed from Christ for my brethren.*

4 Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; 5 *Whose are the fathers*, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, *Christ came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Our apostle, to vindicate himself for bearing such a passionate affection to the Jews, and for being so highly concerned for their eternal welfare, doth in these two verses recount and sum up the high privi-

leges and prerogatives belonging to the Jews above any other nation under heaven: namely these, They were Israelites, that is, the seed and posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. *To whom pertaineth the adoption*; that is, national adoption, not personal; God adopting the nation of the Jews to be an holy people to himself, and calling them his sons and his first-born. *And the glory*; that is, the glorious presence of God among them, the temple, the ark, but particularly the *Shechinah*, or Divine presence, from between the cherubims. *And the covenants*; that is, the covenant made with Abraham and Moses, the old and new covenant, *Jer. xxxi. 32.* *And the giving of the law*: it was the prerogative of this people, that all their laws, ceremonial, judicial, and moral, were composed and delivered to them by God himself. *And the service of God*: that is, they only had the true worship of God amongst them, and no other nation could have the like, but by being a debtor to them for it. *And the promise*; that is, in general, all the blessings promised to them in the land of Canaan; and, in particular, the promise of the Messiah, or God's gracious purpose and intention to send his Son into the world to accomplish its redemption. *Whose are the fathers*; that is, the beloved fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were their ancestors, and they their offspring. *Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came*; that is, of which Israelites Christ came; the promised Messiah, according to the flesh or human nature, was their offspring, even he who, according to his divine nature, *was over all, God blessed for evermore.* Note here, 1. How the apostle reserves the greatest privilege for the last: Christ's being born one of their nation, and according to the flesh descended from the Jewish stock, this was the topping privilege. Note, 2. That this restrictive clause, *according to the flesh*, plainly supposeth another nature in Christ, according to which he came not from the Israelites, which can be no other but the Divine Nature or Godhead, which in the following words is attributed to him: *Who is over all, God blessed for evermore.* Which glorious title given to Christ, as it highly exalts the prerogative of the Jews as being a people of whom so blessed and great a Person descended, so on the other hand it aggravates their sin and condemnation, in rejecting a person of such infinite worth and dignity, notwithstanding he descended from them. Now from the whole learn, 1. That a fulness or richness of instituted means of grace, for the true knowledge and worship of God, is matter of high dignotion and

gracious condescension from God to man: here the *glory, the covenants, the service of God, &c.* are numbered amongst the great and gracious respects vouchsafed by God to the Jews. Learn, 2. That the highest privileges and vouchsafements from God may be conferred upon a people who are neither pleasing to God, nor accepted with him. Such were the Jews, to whom the fore-mentioned privileges did belong: a people rejected by God for their obduracy and unbelief. Learn, 3. That it is no small honour to be of the race or kindred of such as have been holy saints and faithful servants of the most high and holy God. The Jews here were very honourable, as they were the seed of Abraham; but much more so, had they trod in the steps, and done the works, of their father Abraham. Learn, 4. 'That Jesus Christ, who was the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, was yet, according to his divine nature, *Lord over all, God blessed for evermore*; he is over all, that is, over all things, and over all persons; and he is blessed for evermore, which is the constant title given to him that is God, and to none but him. The Socinians, to avoid the force of this text, which fully proves the divinity of Christ, turn the words into a thanksgiving for Christ, and read them thus: Of whom Christ was according to the flesh; *God, who is over all, be blessed for ever*. A manifest perversion of the sense of the apostle's words, which was to show that according to the flesh he descended from Abraham: but that he had another nature, which was not derived from Abraham, even a Divine nature, according to which he was *over all, God blessed for evermore*.

6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: 7 Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9 For this is the word of promise. At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son.

Here the apostle answers an objection against the rejection of the Jews: "If they be cast off by God, what will become of the promise of God, made to Abraham, saying, *I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed*?" He answers, by distinguishing a

two-fold seed that Abraham had. Some were only his carnal seed, or the children of his flesh; others were his spiritual seed, or the children of his faith. Now the carnal seed of Abraham, born according to the course of nature, were not the children of God to whom the promise was made, but the children represented by Isaac, born by the supernatural power of the Spirit of God; these are to be accounted the true seed of Abraham, mentioned in the covenant, when God says, *I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed*. So that the force of the apostle's argument lies thus: The rejection of such Jews, or such of Abraham's seed only who were so according to the flesh, cannot make the word or promise of God to Abraham and his seed of no effect, because he made no absolute promise to them as such. But, says the apostle, none of those Jews, whose rejection I speak of, have any such promise made to them; therefore the rejection of some of Abraham's natural seed doth not, cannot make void the word and promise of God. Learn hence, 1. That the promises of God to his children and people are firm and stable; they shall not be made void, but be accomplished and made good to those that have a title to them, and interest in them, and fulfil the conditions of them: *not as though the word or promise of God has taken no effect, all are not Israel that are of Israel*. Learn thence, 2. That as all were not true Israelites of old that did bear the name of Israelites; so all are not true Christians at this day, who take upon them the name of Christ, and bear the name of Christians. Learn, 3. That men are very prone to bear up themselves upon the piety of their ancestors, though strangers, in practice, to their piety; as the Jews boasted they were the seed of Abraham, but did not the works of Abraham; whereas men are so far from being God's children, because they had godly parents, that Christ told the Jews, who came forth out of Abraham's own loins, that they were of their father the devil *John viii. 44*.

10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger: 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

Our apostle having in the foregoing verses proved, from what was done in Abraham's family, that it was the purpose and pleasure of God to account only those for Abraham's seed who were the children of his faith, and to reject the rest for their unbelief; in these verses he prosecutes the same argument, by insisting upon another special dispensation of God in the family of Isaac, whose wife Rebecca had twins, namely Jacob and Esau, and had neither of them any thing in them to move God to love the one and dislike the other: yet a preference was given to the one before the other. So that the apostle's argument runs thus: "As Jacob and Esau were begotten of the same father, born of the same mother, lay together in the same womb, and had neither of them done any thing at all to oblige or disoblige Almighty God; yet he was pleased to make a difference between them and their posterity after them, giving the beloved Canaan to Jacob and his seed, which by birth-right belonged to Esau and his offspring: so in like manner is it the will and pleasure of God, that the believing Gentiles should become heirs of the promise by faith in Christ, and that the unbelieving Jews should be rejected and cast off for their infidelity." Learn hence, 1. That Almighty God chooses persons to the participation of divine favours. Learn, 2. That the choice which God makes of men to the enjoyment of that special favour of being his peculiar people is not according to their external privileges or works, but according to his own free pleasure. Learn, 3. That as Jacob's and Esau's being unborn, and having done neither good nor evil, is used as an argument to prove, that the choice of the one before the other could not be of works; so it is a strong argument against the pre-existence of souls, and their being sent into bodies by way of punishment for former sins. For upon that supposition it could not be true, that the children had done neither good nor evil before they were born, seeing they might both have sinned in that state of pre-existence. Learn, 4, and observe, That the apostle doth not say, That before the children had done either good or evil, God said, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated: but only the elder shall serve the younger. Hatred here may be taken two ways, either, 1. For a less degree of love; God preferring the seed of Jacob before the posterity of Esau, giving the former the good land of Canaan, to the latter the barren mountains of Seir. Or, 2. If hatred be taken in the strictest sense, then God is said to hate Esau, that is, the Edomites, after their

wicked and unnatural behaviour towards their brethren the Israelites; and upon that occasion see *Obadiak*, ver. 10. *For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off, for ever.* Nothing renders a person the object of God's hatred but sin; he doth not hate the devil himself, as he is his creature, but only as he is a sinner. God adjudges none to eternal perdition, but with respect to sin. Observe, 5. That Jacob and Esau are not here to be considered personally, but collectively; for the Israelites that descended from Jacob, and for the Edomites which sprang from Esau: for Esau in his own person did not serve Jacob, but the Edomites did serve the Israelites. Thus the elder did serve the younger. Again, it appears that Job and all his friends were of the posterity of Esau: God did not then hate the person of all the posterity of Esau, but only those of them who by their violence and wickedness rendered themselves the object of his hatred.

14 What shall we say then? *Is there unrighteousness with God?* God forbid. 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

The apostle having by the two foregoing instances asserted his doctrine, concerning the purpose and decree of God to justify those that should believe in his Son, be they Gentiles or Jews: and consequently made it good, that no word or promise of God falls to the ground by the rejection of the unbelieving Jews; proceeds in this verse to demonstrate the righteousness of God in the execution of this his purpose. *Is there then, says he, unrighteousness or injustice with God? God forbid.* As if the apostle had said, "Is there any cause to say, That God, who preferred the posterity of Isaac before that of Ishmael, and the seed of Jacob before the numerous offspring of Esau; is there any just reason to say, that God is now unjust in calling the Gentiles, and upon their faith owning them for his people, the spiritual seed of Abraham, and rejecting the Jews because of their unbelief? God forbid that we should accuse him of unrighteous dealing upon this account." Learn hence, That God is just, infallibly and inflexibly just and righteous, in all his dealings with, and dispensations towards the children of men: *Is there unrighteousness with God?* That is, there is none, there can be none. Learn, 2. That all such tenets or doctrines which reflect any man.

nor of unrighteousness upon God, or charge him with hard dealing, ought to be disclaimed with the utmost abhorrency and detestation: *Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.* Observe next, How the apostle proves that there is no unrighteousness in this dispensation of God, in rejecting the Jews and calling the Gentiles, because he had said to Moses, he would show mercy, where, when, and to whom, or to what people, he pleased. If therefore, upon the infidelity of the Jews, he will call the idolatrous Gentiles, and receive them to be his people, who can accuse him of any injustice upon that account? Shall not Almighty God dispense his favours where and upon whom he pleases? May he not confer his kindness upon some, which he owes to none? Learn hence, That God is absolutely and ultimately resolved to follow the counsel of his own will, in and about the justification of sinners; and whatsoever he doth, or resolves to do, his will being the rule of righteousness, is for that reason exactly just and undeniably righteous.

16 So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

As if the apostle had said, "The foregoing instances abundantly show, *That it is not of him that willeth*; for Abraham willed that Ishmael might live to be partaker of the blessing promised to his seed, when he said, Gen. xvii. 18. *O that Ishmael might live before thee!* Nor is it of him that runneth: for when Esau ran to fetch venison for his father, that he might receive the blessing, Gen. xxi. the wisdom of God saw fit to have it otherwise, and to confer the blessing upon Jacob; but it is of God that sheweth mercy, that any one is chosen to be the seed to which the promise made to Abraham belongs, and so to be his church and people." Learn hence, That it is of God's mere grace and mercy, that any sinners are called and admitted to the privilege of justification and adoption, upon any terms and conditions whatsoever. The reason why the sinful and unworthy Gentiles were called to be a people who were not a people, while the Jews were left out, and cast off for their obstinate unbelief, was not because the Gentiles were either more worthy or more willing, but from God's discriminating grace and mercy: *It is not of him that willeth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might

shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Our apostle here proceeds to remove another objection, namely, the seeming injustice or severity of rejecting the Jews, and reserving them to wrath, giving them up to an obdurate heart, because they would not accept of the way which the wisdom of God had appointed for their justification; namely, faith in his Son Jesus Christ. This he clears by another instance; to wit, that of Pharaoh, who had so often hardened his own heart obstinately, and provoked God at last to harden him judicially. *For this cause*, says God, *have I raised thee up*; in the original it is, *I have made thee stand*; that is, "I have sustained thee, and kept thee alive, when thou deservedst, and mightest justly have expected, to be cut off by the several plagues inflicted on thee for thy obstinate hardness of heart, that *I might shew my power in thee*, &c. Or, I have patiently borne thy stubbornness for a long time, that my power and justice might more illustriously appear at last in that conspicuous judgment, which I will execute upon thee in the sight of all the nations of the earth." Learn hence, That some sinners, whom the patience of God has long waited upon, are preserved of him, and raised out of great and imminent dangers by him, for this end; namely, to make them examples of his just indignation against stubborn and obdurate rebels, and that in the most illustrious and signal manner. *For this cause have I raised thee up*, that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.

As if he had said, "From these scripture instances we may gather and conclude, that God may without the least injustice magnify his mercy, in sparing and pardoning some sinners, and render his justice glorious in punishing others; yea, in punishing sin with sin, hardening them judicially, who had hardened themselves obstinately." Here observe, That God did not harden Pharaoh's heart by any positive act or influx upon it, by infusing any evil into it; for this would make God the author of sin; but he was hardened by way of judiciary tradition, after he had long hardened himself. First, He was delivered up into the hand of Satan, who deluded him by the magicians counterfeiting the same miracle that Moses

wrought; and this hardened him against the belief of any thing that Moses either did or said. Secondly, He was delivered up to his own lusts, particularly idolatry, ambition, and covetousness; and these hardened Pharaoh's heart. As an idolater, he was loath to receive a message from the God of Israel, whom he knew not: *Who is the Lord*, says he, *that I should obey him? I know not the Lord.* As an ambitious prince, it went to his very heart, to hear so mean a man as Moses control him in his own dominions, saying, *Let the people go, that they may serve the Lord.* This enraged him, to hear of any lord over that people but himself; and as a covetous man, he was loath to hear of parting with a people, by whose pains, in making brick, he had so great an income. Thus Pharaoh's affected hardness was followed with inflicted hardness. Learn hence, That God doth justly deliver that man up to hardness of heart by way of punishment, who has often hardened his own heart against God by repeated acts of sin.

*Iuste toties cor ejus obduratur in penam,
Quoties ipse cor suum obduravit in culpam.*

LIEUTREUR.

19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? 20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

Here the apostle brings in the unbelieving and rejected Jews making an objection against God: "If the case be thus, that God doth sometimes, and that justly, leave obdurate sinners to harden themselves, why is he offended at it, and complains of it? If God hardeneth us because he will, why doth he find fault with us for our hardness of heart? For who hath at any time resisted his will? How is it in our power to avoid being hardened, if it be his will that we should be hardened?" Learn hence, That guilty sinners are full of hard thoughts of God, and very prone to think the divine dispensations unreasonable, if not unrighteous; but upon false and mistaken grounds: *Why doth he find fault? Who hath resisted his will?* To this objection the apostle returns a very smart answer, saying, *Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall, &c.* In which answer, Observe, 1. A vehement objurgation or reproof. 2. A substantial vindica-

tion of the righteousness and wisdom of God in his proceedings with men. Note, 1. The objurgation or reproof, drawn up in an interrogative form, which argues great intenseness of mind in the person speaking: *Nay but, O man, who art thou?* As if the apostle had said, "What bold and unheard-of presumption is this, that man, blind and ignorant man, guilty, sinful man, obnoxious to wrath and eternal death, that he should undertake to reprove and censure, to judge and condemn the actions and dispensations of the most high and holy God, as if they were crooked and perverse, defective either in justice or wisdom?" Learn hence, that it is no less than horrid and horrible presumption for so weak, sinful, and worthless a creature, as man is, to contest or dispute with the most high God about the wisdom or righteousness of any of his ways: *O man, who art thou that repliest against God?* Note, 2. How the apostle vindicates the wisdom and righteousness of God in his proceedings with men in general, and against the Jews in particular: showing that there is no more cause to make this objection against God for rejecting the unbelieving Jews, and showing favour to the believing Gentiles, than for the pitcher to contend with him that formed it, why he made it of such a shape, and not of another figure; or for the clay, when it is marred and broken, to complain of the potter for making of one part of it a vessel unto honour, and the other unto dishonour. Learn hence, That men who have made themselves obnoxious to the justice of God by a long-continued course of sin and disobedience against God, (as the unbelieving Jews here spoken of evidently did,) have no cause either to complain of God's severe proceedings against themselves, or of his favourable dispensations towards others. What just cause had the Jews, rejected for their own unbelief and hardness of heart, to murmur against God for showing mercy to the Gentiles, who submitted to the terms of mercy?

22 What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; 23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, 24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

As if the apostle had said, "What

though God doth not presently punish the obstinate and unbelieving Jews according to their desert, but beareth with them, and exercises forbearance towards them, and they go on by their continual rebellions to make themselves fit objects of his wrath; but he is pleased still with great gentleness and patience to bear with them as he did with Pharaoh; and if after all they be more hardened, as he was, by God's forbearance, what show of injustice, I pray, is it, if he punishes them at last with greater severity, as God did him? If he swallow up their nation, destroy their temple, ruin their city, what injustice is it to destroy those, who, by making themselves objects of God's wrath, are fitted for destruction?" Here note, That the *vessels of wrath fitted for destruction*, are such as, the apostle saith, *God endured with much long suffering*; and therefore they were not made vessels of wrath by God, but by themselves; after they had filled up the measure of their sins, and thereby fitted themselves as vessels for destruction. God endured them with much long-suffering, though judgment at last took hold upon them to the uttermost. Learn hence, That Almighty God may, without the least suspicion of injustice or unrighteousness, punish with the utmost severity such a person or a people, whom he hath long endured with much forbearance, to go on in a course of sinning, if at last they repent not. This was the manner of God's dealing with the Jews here. His lenity towards the Gentiles is next expressed, ver. 23. *That he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, &c.* As if the apostle had said, Can God be taxed with unrighteousness, in showing the riches of his glorious grace and mercy towards the despised Gentiles, whom he hath called to the faith of Christ, and thereby fitted and prepared them to be vessels of mercy? Hath he not just right to show his mercy to such persons who have submitted to the terms upon which he hath promised favour and acceptance, and to own them as his peculiar people, although they be not the natural seed of Abraham, seeing they are his spiritual? Note here, That as the unbelieving Jews were called, in the former verse, *vessels of wrath*; so the believing Gentiles are called, in this verse, *vessels of mercy*; because as vessels are fitted and formed by the hand of the artificer for the use to which they are designed, in like manner are believers wrought by God and framed by his Holy Spirit, and made meet to receive the mercy of God, that is, the fruits and effects of his mercy, especially pardon of sin and

peace with God. Concerning the vessels of wrath, the apostle speaks passively; they are fitted for destruction: concerning the vessels of mercy, he speaks actively, that God has prepared them unto glory; that is, made them meet and fit by grace here for glory hereafter. Learn thence, That the new creation of the saints, and all the spiritual workmanship that is found upon them, is to be ascribed unto God, and to the effectual working of his grace: *He hath afore prepared them unto glory.* Learn, 2. That the fullest measures of glory hereafter shall be the portion of such, and only such, as are first prepared by grace and holiness to receive them here. Learn, 3. That those only are vessels of mercy, prepared by God unto glory, who upon the evangelical call have been prevailed with, by faith and repentance, to answer the command and call of God: *That he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called.*

25 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. 26 And it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are not my people*: there shall they be called the children of the living God.

Our apostle having hitherto vindicated the wisdom and righteousness of God in the rejection of the Jews, and calling of the Gentiles; lest the Jews should stumble and take offence at it, in these and the following verses he proves, that the calling of the Gentiles was long before foretold, both by the prophet Hosea, and the prophet Isaiah; by the prophet Hosea, chap. ii. 22. *I will call them my people, which were not my people.* And, chap. i. 10. *Instead of, Ye are not my people, it shall be said, Ye are the sons of the living God.* Which expressions signify and import God's receiving the Gentiles into the church as an act of free and undeserved mercy, whom the Jews looked upon as castaways, as strangers, as dogs; accounting themselves only to be of his family and household. Next he produces the testimony of Isaiah.

27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved. 28 For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon

the earth. 29 And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

Here the apostle shows how the reduction of the obdurate Jews was foretold by Isaiah as well as Hosea: That although the number of the Jews, according to the flesh, were as the sand of the sea, yet the greatest number of them would be passed by for their unbelief, and a remnant only saved. This the prophet speaks of those Jews who escaped into the hand of Sennacherib; and the apostle makes the deliverance of those few, a type of them that should believe in Christ, and be saved by him. And the prophet farther adds, That God would finish his work, and cut it short in righteousness; that is, God will make quick work with that incorrigible and unreclaimable people; such swift destruction shall come upon the multitude of evil doers in the land of Israel as shall bring them very low, cut them short, lop them off, so that they shall be left as a tree, of which only the stump remaineth. They shall be reduced to a small remnant, and a remnant only of that remnant shall be converted. Now first, from the literal import of those words, *Though Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant only shall be saved*, we learn, That a numerous people or nation, among whom God hath been truly worshipped, and this for a long season, may, notwithstanding, for their wickedness be destroyed, and reduced by God to a very small number. Secondly, from the typical import of these words, together with the apostle's scope in citing of them, we gather, that amongst those multitudes who are called by the gospel to believe on our Lord Jesus Christ, and who make profession of his name and truth, the number of those who will be at last eternally saved, will be but comparatively small and little; *A remnant shall be saved.*

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: 31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling stone;

As if the apostle had, said, "Lord, what

shall we say to this great mystery of grace, the calling of the Gentile world, and the cutting off and casting away most of the present Jewish nation? That the Gentiles who lived in ignorance and blindness, in sin and unrighteousness, should attain to righteousness by faith in Christ; and that the Israelites, who had God's own righteous law amongst them, and trusted to be justified by the observation of it, yet should not attain to that righteousness which God accepteth. And wherefore have they not attained it! but because they sought not justification by that faith which God prescribeth for that end, namely, faith in the Mediator; but thought it must be attained by the works of the law, keeping all the ceremonial precepts, by which no flesh can be justified: and the reason why they sought it not by faith was this, *They stumbled at the stumbling stone*; that is, at the Lord Jesus Christ, taking offence at his poverty and mean condition in the world, and at the spirituality of his kingdom." Learn hence, That the great humiliation of Christ in the days of his flesh, did prove a snare and occasion to many persons to despise and reject him, to stumble at him, and fall foul upon him. But in what respects is Christ called a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence? *Answer*, Negatively; not because he was by God designed, either intentionally or accidentally, to be such. All stumbling and offence-taking at Christ are accidental, proceeding from the depravity of man, not from the design of God. Much less were the Jews fore-appointed and ordained by God to stumble at his Son; for God appoints no man to do that which he prohibits all men from doing. And as no man is necessitated by the decree of God, so neither is he constrained or necessitated by Satan, by his corruption, or any other instrument, to stumble or take offence at Christ; for actions necessitated upon men are neither demeritorious nor punishable. But positively Christ is called a stone of stumbling because men, willingly ignorant and wilfully perverse, do take offence at him. Though God never designed or desired any man's stumbling at Christ, yet he knew and foresaw that many, very many, would stumble at him: and accordingly expressed him by a prophetic character answering the event, and predicting that which in time came to pass: *Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-block.*

33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Observe here, 1. What use and office our Lord Jesus Christ is of to his church: he is a stone, a corner-stone, the chief corner-stone; a corner-stone for strength, the chief corner-stone for ornament and beauty. As the corner-stone bears the weight of the building, so doth Christ bear the weight of his church, and supports all the pillars and supporters of it; yet this precious corner-stone is accidentally and eventually a *stone of stumbling, and rock of offence*. Some are offended at the poverty of his person and the meanness of his condition, others at the sublimity and sanctity of his doctrine; some are offended at his cross, others at his free grace; but such as instead of being offended at him do believe on him, shall never be ashamed of, or confounded by, him. Learn hence, That those who, according to the direction of the gospel, do believe on our Lord Jesus Christ, shall never have cause to be ashamed. Here note, What they shall not be ashamed of, when and why they shall not be ashamed: 1. What the sincere believer shall not be ashamed of. *Ans.* He shall never be ashamed of his choice; he shall not be ashamed of his profession; he shall never be ashamed of the cause and interest of Christ, which he has owned and vindicated in the world: he shall never be ashamed of the work and service of Christ, nor of any time sincerely spent in that work and service; he shall never be ashamed of his reproaches and sufferings, tribulation and persecutions, for the sake of Christ. In a word, he shall never be ashamed hereafter that he never was ashamed here, either of Christ and his gospel, his work and service, or his cause and interest. Note, 2. When the believer shall not be ashamed; namely, when he is called forth to bear his testimony for Christ before the world, at the hour of death, and at the day of judgment: neither the dreadfulfulness of the day, nor the majesty of the Judge, nor the number of the accusers, nor the impartiality of the sentence, nor the separation that shall then be made, will in the least cause him to be ashamed. Note, 3. Why the believer shall never be ashamed. *Ans.* The cause of shame is removed and taken away, namely, sin; those only from whom he can reasonably fear shame, will never be ashamed of him; he can look God and Christ, his own conscience, and the whole world, in the face, without shame and blushing. O! that sinners would now be ashamed of their unbelief, which otherwise will put them to eternal shame, and bring upon them everlasting confusion in the day of the Lord. *Whoever believeth on him shall*

never be ashamed; but he that believeth not in him, shame and the wrath of God abideth on him.

CHAP. X.

Our apostle prosecutes in this the argument which he had begun in the former chapter, viz. The temporary rejection of his countrymen the Jews, for their obstinate refusal of that way of justification which the wisdom of God had prescribed, namely, by faith in his Son Jesus Christ: and well knowing that what he was about to say upon that argument would sound very harsh in their ears, who were so addicted to seek justification only by the works of the law, he begins this chapter, as he did the former, with a most solemn protestation of his unfeigned love unto them, and most fervent desire for their salvation: for thus he speaks,—

BRETHREN, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

Where observe, 1. The mighty concern which the apostle had for the eternal salvation of his countrymen the Jews, who sought his destruction; their salvation lay very near his heart, and he was afraid they should miss it by taking the wrong way for obtaining it, by building all their hopes of salvation upon such a bottom as would never bear the fabric, but utterly fail them; namely, justification by works. Observe, 2. What it was that made the apostle so concerned for the Jews. It was not upon the account of their wicked lives and scandalous immoralities, but for their bad principles and fundamental errors. They opposed the honour of God to the Son of God, and the observation of the law to the faith of Christ. From whence learn, That we ought to be concerned for those who lie under damnable errors, although they be men of good carriage and commendable conversation. Not only the vicious and ungodly, but the erroneous and unsound, are to be the objects of our pity and prayer; for error is as damnable as vice; the one is an open road, the other a by-path, to hell and destruction; and accordingly, he that has a due care of his soul's salvation will be as much afraid of erroneous principles as of debauched practices.

2 For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

As if the apostle had said, "I can bear them witness that many, very many, of the Jews, have a zealous desire in their way to please God, and do what is acceptable in his sight; but though it be a warm, it is but a blind zeal, and not according to right knowledge." Here observe, 1. The apostle is desirous to say the best he could

of his countrymen the Jews; he commends the good meaning of their zeal, but blames the ill conduct of it. It was a misguided and mistaken zeal, and not directed as it ought. Zeal is either one of the best or worst of things in the world. It is a good thing when it is right in its object, right in the measure and degree, and pursued by right means. As to the object of our zeal, it must be that which is certainly and considerably good: certainly good, or else we are zealous for we know not what; and considerably good, or else it doth not deserve our zeal. To be zealous, and that beyond all due measure, for the observation of a ceremony or custom, as some in the Christian church were of old about the observation of *Easter*, is certainly a zeal not according to knowledge. Again, zeal must be prosecuted by lawful and warrantable means; we must not from a principle of zeal do any evil, that good may come. But there is a zeal amongst the church of Rome, which I am sure cannot be according to knowledge, and that is a zeal for ignorance. This is a zeal peculiar to themselves; they will not allow the people to understand what they do in the service of God; they require them to pray, but will not let them know what they pray for; and all this under a pretence that ignorance, which makes a man a block, is the mother of devotion. As if the less men understand the service of God, the better he was pleased with it, and the more they were edified by it.

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

That is, the Jews being ignorant of God's way of justification by faith in Christ discovered in the gospel, and relying upon and trusting to their own works, their obedience to the ceremonial and moral law, to justify and save them, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God; that is, to the way and method which the wisdom of God has discovered for the justification of a sinner by the blood of his Son. Observe here, 1. That by God's righteousness, we are to understand that righteousness which Christ has wrought for us, which God bestows upon us, and the gospel reveals unto us; by establishing their own righteousness, is to be understood their resolution and endeavour to depend upon their own works; their obedience to the law for their justification before God, in opposition against and in contradiction to, that way of justifi-

cation which God has declared; namely, by faith in Christ Jesus, the one and only Mediator. Observe, 2. That upon the first opening of the gospel, no evangelical doctrine was more disrelished by the Jews than justification by the righteousness of Christ. They were possessed with this principle then, that eternal life was attainable only by the works of the law: and according to the example of the Jews at the beginning, persons ever since, even to this very day, are fond of that way of justification. The natural man is a proud man, he likes to live upon his own stock, he cannot stoop to a sincere and universal renunciation of his own righteousness, and to depend wholly upon that of another. 'Tis natural to a man to choose rather to eat a brown crust, or wear a coarse garment, which he can call his own, than to feed upon the richest dainties, or wear the costliest robes, which he must receive as an alms from another. Lord! how hard is it to subdue this pride of spirit, and to be thoroughly convinced of the absolute necessity of another and a better righteousness than our own to constitute us righteous in the sight of God! From the whole learn, 1. How dark-sighted the wisest men are by nature in God's way of justifying and saving sinners: *Ignorant of God's righteousness*, that is, of the way which the wisdom of God has discovered for justifying guilty sinners by faith in his Son. This is known only by divine revelation: Rom. i. 17. *The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith*. It is purely an object of faith, and hangs all upon divine revelation, both as to the righteousness itself, and the manner of imparting it. Learn, 2. How absurd is the attempt, and how injurious the design, to set up and establish a righteousness of our own, either in opposition to, or in conjunction with, the righteousness of God. Alas! we fulfil the law only in sincerity, we cannot fulfil it to perfection; and if it be not to perfection, it cannot be to justification. Therefore to trust to any righteousness of our own for justification before God, which is imperfect and polluted, is both sinful and unsafe. Sinful, because it is confronting the plain declarations of the gospel; and unsafe, because it evacuates Christ: for Christ is of no effect unto us: whosoever are justified by the law, are fallen from grace, Gal. v. 4. Learn, 3. What an hindrance is pride to the salvation of men! it stiffens the will, that it won't stoop to God's terms: they will not have justification in God's way, and they shall not have it in their own. Here it stuck with the Jews; they would not submit to the right-

eousness of God: and here it sticks with too many at this day. Learn, 4. Not to count a righteousness of your own needless to be possessed of, because you want of righteousness of another to confide and trust in. We plead the meritorious righteousness of Christ, to answer the demands of the law; but contend for a personal righteousness of our own, to answer the commands of the gospel. Christ doth indeed ease us of the load of our sins, but not discharge us from the care of our duty. Our being in Christ frees us indeed from condemnation, but then that in-being must be proved by our holy walking; not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, *Rom. v. 1*. Learn, 5. To submit to the righteousness of God, as ever you would enjoy peace with God. The more holy we are, and the more sanctified we grow, the meaner opinion we shall have of ourselves, and the more need of a Saviour, and of justification by him; and shall bless God for the gospel, in which the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; and shall dread it as hell to be found amongst the number of those who, though they be not ignorant of God's righteousness, yet will go about to establish their own righteousness, refusing to submit to the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

There was a threefold law of God, which Christ may be said to be the end of; namely, judicial, ceremonial, and moral. 1. The judicial law was that which God by Moses delivered to the Jews, containing directions for administration of their civil government. Now Christ was the end of the law, as he has abolished it: for the Jewish polity was to continue till the coming of the Messiah, and no longer, *Gen. xlix., Dan. ix. 2*. The ceremonial law was that which did prescribe certain sacred rites and ceremonies to be observed in the external worship of God by the people of Israel. The former law had relation to them as a nation, this as they were a church. Now Christ is the end of this law, as he has abrogated it. All the ceremonies of that law were shadows and types of Christ; now the shadows were to cease, when once the substance was come. 3. The moral law is that holy and eternal rule of righteousness given by God to men, for the right ordering of their thoughts, words, and actions, towards God, their neighbour, and themselves. This law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, and is called *the law of right-*

eousness, *Rom. ix. 31*, *the royal law*, by St. James, chap. ii. 1. Now Christ may be said to be the end of this law, 1. As he is the scope of it. 2. As he is the accomplishment of it. The precepts of the law point at Christ, as he by whom they are accomplished; the promises of the law point at him as he by whom they are ratified; and the threatenings of the law may be said to point at him, as he by whom they are escaped. Christ was the sum of the law, as well as the substance of the gospel. In a word, 3. Christ is the end of the law, inasmuch as he is to a believer what the law would have been unto him if he could have perfectly kept it: namely, righteousness and life, justification and salvation. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to be imputed to every one that believeth in him, the law being our school-master to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith, *Gal. iii. 25*.

5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

As if the apostle had said, "Righteousness by faith can never be obtained by the works of the law, because Moses describeth the righteousness of the law thus. That the man that doeth these things, shall live by them; that is, a prosperous and happy life in the land of Canaan, say some; and eternal life in heaven, say others." But then the law must be understood the moral, not the ceremonial law, according to that of our Saviour, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*; that is, the moral law. This do, and thou shalt live. Where note, That such as seek justification and salvation by the works of the law, must keep the moral law perfectly and exactly; which being impossible to man in his fallen estate, Christ has obtained of his Father, that, for the sake of his righteousness, our sincere, though imperfect obedience, should find acceptance with God, and be available to salvation.

6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) 7 Or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) 8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach.

In which words the apostle seems to set forth the great anxiety and trouble of mind which is found with an awakened sinner; he is at a loss to find out the way how he shall stand justified in the sight of God. The law propounds to him life, but it is upon an impossible condition; but the gospel clearly reveals to him, that Christ has performed what is necessary for his justification, and that by a practical and lively faith he shall have an interest in it. We need not therefore say, *Who shall ascend into heaven for us?* for Christ being ascended, hath given us a convincing proof that the propitiation for our sins is perfect; for otherwise our Surety had not been received into God's sanctuary: therefore to be under perplexities how we may be justified, is to deny the value of his righteousness and the truth of his ascension. And say not, *Who shall descend into the deep?* that is, to bear the torments of hell, and expiate sin; for this is to deny the virtue of his death, whereby he appeased God and redeemed us from wrath to come. In the law, the condemning righteousness of God is made visible: in the gospel, his justifying righteousness is revealed from faith to faith. Eternally magnified be omnipotent Love, that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ has graciously discovered how God may show mercy to repenting and returning sinners, without any prejudice or injury done to his justice. Hereby the soul is at once freed from the fear of God's wrath and anger, and has a lively hope of his love and favour. Lord! what sins are there, which so entire a satisfaction doth not expiate? What torments can they deserve, which his wounds and stripes have not removed! God is just as well as merciful, in justifying him that believeth on Jesus. From the whole note, That the way of acceptance with God is so clearly stated and discovered in the gospel, that we need not be in any doubtful suspense where to find it, or seek other satisfaction than God has given us in his word. *The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thine heart; that word of faith which we preach.*

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Observe here, The two great and principal things which the gospel requires, in order to our justification and salvation.

The first is, *Confession of Christ with our mouth*; that is, in all times of danger, particularly in a time of persecution, to own Christ Jesus our Lord, and to declare that we will serve him, and adhere to him, be ruled of him, and expect only to be saved by him. The second is, *To believe in our hearts, that God hath raised Christ from the dead*. But why is the article of Christ's resurrection only named, seeing faith respects his birth, life, and death, &c. *Ans.* Because this article of the resurrection presupposeth all the rest of the antecedents to it, and consequences of it; as namely, his incarnation, death, and passion, ascension and intercession. This article therefore of the resurrection is put for all the rest, and includes all the rest: for as he could not have risen, had he not first died, so his death had availed us nothing, unless he had risen again. Learn hence, 1. That all those who would be accepted with God unto righteousness and life, must be such as do believe in Christ with the heart, and openly confess with the mouth, that he is the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. *If thou confessest and believest, thou shalt be saved.* Learn, 2. That the principal seat and subject of faith is not in the understanding barely, but in the will, called here the heart: *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness*: not the head. Although knowledge is so necessary to faith, that it is sometimes put for faith, as in Isa. liii. *By his knowledge, or by the knowledge of him, shall my righteous servant justify many*; yet there may be much light in the understanding, where there is no life in the will, much knowledge in the head, where there is no faith in the heart, nor obedience in the life. Therefore says the apostle here, *With the heart man believeth, &c.*

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Observe here, How the apostle proclaims Jesus Christ a common and universal Saviour of all mankind who believe in him: without any discrimination or difference between Jew and Gentile. *Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed, whosoever shall call upon his name, shall be saved.* Where by believing on him, and calling upon him, must be understood such a faith in him as is the parent and prin-

ple of obedience to him. For the devil himself may as well pass for a believer, as a disobedient soul. If our works be no better than the works of devils, our faith is no better than theirs neither, in the account of God. He believes so as not to be ashamed, who lives as he doth believe. In vain is it to expect salvation by Christ, if we do not yield subjection to him. Lord! how many are there that desire thou shouldst suffer for their sins, so they may have the satisfaction to commit them; content that thou shouldst bear the blame, so they may have their liberty to commit the faults! If they may but live in their sins, they take it kindly, that Christ will die for them; but the design of Christ's death was to deliver us not only from the danger, but from the dominion of our sins; to free us not only from the wrath of God, but from the rage of our lusts.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

The scope of the apostle in these words is to prove, that there was a necessity of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, in order to their believing on Christ; and his way of arguing is very forcible, demonstrative, and convincing. Thus, "God has by the prophets promised salvation to the Gentiles; but without calling on him there is no salvation; and without faith there is no calling upon him by prayer; and without hearing there is no faith; and without a preacher there is no hearing; and without solemn mission, or sending by Christ and his ministers, there can be no preacher." And the apostle's manner of speaking is by way of interrogation, which is equivalent to a negation: *How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?* That is, it is impossible to do it, and it would be impious and wicked to do it. None must be the object of our prayers, but he that is the object of our faith and trust: now it is God alone that is the object of our faith and trust; therefore he alone must be prayed unto. And if so, then the practice of the Papists in praying to angels and saints departed, is very blame-worthy and abominable in the sight of God. How can they pray unto them, unless they believe

in them and trust in them? And if they trust in them that curse falls upon them, *Cursed is that man that trusteth in man*; that is, in any creature. The truth is, if Christ himself were a mere man, and not God as well as man, we should sin by worshipping of him; but it is one good argument to prove the divinity of Christ, that the scripture represents him as the object of faith, and religious invocation. From the whole observe, That the only way to heaven is by Christ, the only way to Christ is by faith, the only way to faith is by the word, it cometh by hearing; the only way, that is, the only ordinary way. What becomes of those that never heard of Christ in the preaching of the gospel, God only is fit to judge. This is certain, that all men at the great day shall be judged according to the law that they were under, and obliged by, and no other. Now promulgation being the essence of a law, the gospel cannot be a law to them to whom it was not promulgated and made known; but a practical belief of the gospel is indispensably necessary to the salvation of them to whom it is revealed. Observe further, The great reverence and high esteem which is due and payable to the preachers of the gospel, and that by the approbation of God himself. He commands us to admire the very feet of them that preach the gospel of his Son unto us, and bring glad tidings of good things: *How beautiful are the feet of them, &c.* And for great reason should it be thus, because the ministers of the gospel are the messengers of Christ; they receive both their mission and commission from him; they are instructed by him, they negotiate for him, they speak in his name, they act in his stead; and whatsoever they either promise or threaten in God's name, he stands ready and resolved to perform it, Isa. xliv. 26. *He confirmeth the words of his servants, and performeth the counsel of his messengers.* Lord! how beautiful and blessed are the feet of thy messengers and ministers in thy account! Let them be so in thy people's estimation also. Learn hence, That nothing ought to be so welcome to us, and so joyfully entertained by us, as the preaching and preachers of the gospel. *How beautiful are the feet of them, &c.*

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

Here an objection is tacitly implied and answered: some might say, "If the gospel be thus excellent, and the feet of them that preach it is so beautiful, whence was it that the Jews, to whom it was first preached, did not receive and yield obedi-

ence to it?" The apostle answers, that this infidelity and obstinacy of the Jews was foretold by the prophets of old, particularly by Isaiah, who complains, chap. liii. 1. *Lord, who hath believed our report? Learn hence, 1. That the faith of the gospel is not common to all that hear the gospel. True, the hearing of the word is necessary unto faith, but faith doth not necessarily follow the hearing of the word. Learn, 2. That the prophets of God did foresee, and by the spirit of prophesy foretold, what small success the preaching of the gospel would have to and amongst the Jews. Learn, 3. That yet the prophets' prediction was not the cause, but the consequence, of the Jews' rejection of the gospel. It was not because the prophet said so, that they did not believe; but because they believed not, therefore the prophet said so, They have not obeyed the gospel: for so Isaiah saith of them.*

17 So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

As if the apostle had said, "It is very evident, and these testimonies show, that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the preaching of the word of God." The grace of faith is wrought by the Spirit in the act of hearing: and the matter heard by which this faith is wrought, is the word of God preached. Persons must hear, that they may believe; and God's word must be preached, that they may hear. A non-preaching minister then is no minister; he is like a bell without a clapper, or a crier without a voice; he neither answers the design of his commission, nor the end of the gospel's institution, which was to be the instrumental mean of faith. *Faith cometh by hearing.*

18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

It was no less than a miracle that the gospel, in the space of a few years, should be preached to all nations, and planted in the remotest parts of the world; and yet thus it was; which makes St. Paul here apply that to the preaching of the apostles, which David applies to the preaching of the heavens, *Psa. xix. 4.* The gospel of Christ, like the sun in the firmament, casts its beautiful and glorious beams all the world over. For upon the commission given out by Christ to his apostles, to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, the apostles divided themselves into the several quarters of the world, for the speedy performance of

this service, namely, the carrying of the gospel, as the sun doth his light, unto all the nations of the earth. As if St. Paul had here said, "Like as the voice of the heavens are gone through the world, so is the voice of Christ and the light of his gospel, which doth much more declare the glory of God than the sun and the moon in the heavens can do." Some observe, that there was hardly any one considerable nation in the world, but within forty years after Christ's ascension had the glad tidings of the gospel preached to it. Hence the apostle tells us, *Tit. ii. 11. That the grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men: that is, the gospel, without restriction was tendered to all nations, Jew and Gentile; to all persons, bond and free, honourable and ignoble. Behold the goodness and mercy of God in enlightening the dark corners of the world with this glorious light from heaven! Behold the great power and efficacy of the word, under the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit! Behold an example of laborious diligence and industry in ministerial service! what pains did the apostles take! what hazards did they run! what journeys did they undertake, to preach Jesus Christ, to plant and propagate the everlasting gospel! Shall not we attend our flock, and travel from house to house to visit our charge, which falls within the compass of a few miles, when the apostles compassed sea and land, travelled far and near, laboured night and day, to transmit the gospel to the ends of the world? Lord! how does their indefatigable diligence shame our supine negligence!*

19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. 20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not: I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. 21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Did not Israel know, that is, of the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, and of their own infidelity in rejecting it? This they might have known both from the testimony of Moses and Esaias. First, from Moses' testimony, who says, *Deut. xxi. I will provoke you (Jews refusing to believe) unto jealousy by them that are (yet) no people (of God); and by a foolish nation (so the Gentiles were accounted by the com-*

ceited Jews *I will anger you*. When God preferred the Gentiles before the Jews, the hearts of the latter were vexed with jealousy and anger, to behold all their privileges taken from them, and given to the former, whom they accounted a people most vile and despicable. The second testimony is that of Esaias, who the apostle says was very bold; that is, very plain and express, in foretelling God's calling of the Gentiles and rejecting of the Jews: calling the Gentiles by his free grace, and seeking them that first sought him not; and casting off the Jews, who, after all his forbearance and long suffering, did continue obstinately to reject the offers of his grace, and the tenders of his mercy. Here note, 1. The holy courage of this evangelic prophet Isaiah, in the discharge of his office: with great boldness and freedom he foretells the calling of the Gentiles, and casting off the Jews, although it cost him dear, even his life, being sawn asunder with a wooden saw, as some affirm. There ought to meet in the ministers and messengers of God both courage and impartiality; courage in fearing no faces, impartiality in sparing no crimes. Note, 2. What little cause or reason the ministers of God have to sit down in despondency, after so many unwearied attempts made in vain to reclaim sinners from their wicked ways; when they consider the infinite patience of God towards them, *who stretches forth his hands all the day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people*; that is, patiently contends with their obstinacy and perverseness! Lord! why should we, that are sinners ourselves, think much to bear with sinners? Let us rather imitate thy example in waiting upon them with the offers of grace and mercy, and follow them with our melting entreaties and passionate importunities, till we either overcome their obstinacy, or leave them totally inexcusable.

CHAP. XI.

The design and scope of our apostle in this chapter is twofold: 1. To keep the Jews from dejection and despair. 2. To preserve the Gentiles from presumption and pride. To keep the Jews from despair, he tells them, That though God hath certainly rejected them for rejecting his Son, and the gospel of salvation by him, yet this rejection of theirs was neither total nor final: though many of them were blinded, yet not all; some believed then, and many more should believe afterwards, before the end of the world. To preserve the Gentiles from pride and presumption, he prescribes to them humility and lowliness of mind, not to be high-minded, but fear; lest, being ingrafted into the good olive, they should for their security and unfruitfulness be broken off, as the Jews had been before them, who were natural branches. Thus he bespeaks them both:

I SAY then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

Our apostle having shown, in the end of the foregoing chapter, that the Jews would be rejected, and the Gentiles called, begins this chapter by answering a great and popular objection. Some hereupon might be ready to say, "If this be so, then God has cast away his covenant people, violated his covenant promise, forgot the seed of Abraham his friend." He answers by his accustomed form of denial, *God forbid*: and then proceeds to show, that the rejection of the Jews was not total: God did not reject them all, but the unbelieving part of them only. And this he proves by producing himself as an instance in the case; *I myself*, says he, *am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin*. As if he had said, "I am myself a Jew by nature and nation; not a proselyte converted to the Jewish faith, but a Jew by lineal descent, of the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh; yet am not I cast off by God; therefore God has not cast away all his people." Learn hence, How many unbelievers soever God rejects, he will not cast away one soul that sincerely believes in his Son, and gives up himself to the obedience of the gospel. Believers are God's jewels; he will not cast them away. They are his children, his portion, his inheritance; he will never cast them off. They are united to him by the bond of the Holy Spirit, and he has engaged himself to them by the bond of an everlasting covenant. Believers love God and his truth for ever, and the God of truth will love them for ever. *God has not cast away his people.*

2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.—

Here we have a second argument to prove that God would not wholly cast off the Jewish church and people; namely, because he had foreknown them; that is, had chosen the body of them to be a special and peculiar people to himself, above and before all the people of the earth; and had also foreknown, that is, foreseen, that many of them would, through the assistance of his Holy Spirit, savingly believe on the promised Messias. God never did, never will cast away such, either among Jews or Gentiles.

—Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. 4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

Another instance is here produced, to prove that God had not suffered all the Jews to apostatize and fall away through unbelief; and that is, the instance of Elias, in those days there was such a general revolt among the Jews from the worship of the true God to Jeroboam's idolatry, that he thought himself alone. But God assures him, there was not such a dearth of saints as he feared, he having reserved to himself seven thousand true and faithful worshippers of himself, who had never bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Learn hence, That even in times of universal apostacy and epidemical degeneracy, God has a number to stand up for, and witness to, his name and truth, and that the number of them is more than we either imagine or believe. God has ever had, and always will have, a seed to serve him, which shall be accounted to him for a generation; and although the number of revolvers be great, yet the number of the righteous is not small.

5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.

Here we have St. Paul making application of the foregoing example to the present case. As Elias was not alone in the corrupt state of Israel then, so neither was the apostle alone now, in this time of general rejection of the Jewish church and nation. God had a number then, he has a remnant now, which, according to his free and gracious purpose, are brought to believe in his Son. Although the Jews who believed were few in comparison of them that were rejected, called therefore a remnant, which is but small and little in respect of the whole piece; yet there were many thousands of them that did believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and obtained, no doubt, salvation by him, Acts xxi. 20. *Thou seest, brother, how many thousand Jews there are which believe.* Observe farther, The conclusion which the apostle doth infer and

draw from the fore-mentioned assertion: "If a remnant be saved, according to the free purpose and gracious election of God, then 'tis not upon the consideration of the merit of their own works; they are not justified and accepted for the works of the law, otherwise grace is no more grace: for what need is there of grace, where men have continued in all things written in the law to do them? for the man that doeth those things shall live in them. But, on the other hand, if it be of works that we are justified and accepted, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work." Learn hence, 1. That such as are chosen in Christ to be a people near unto God, are put into this state by mere grace, and unmerited favour. Learn, 2. That grace comes in to supply the defect of our works, and to procure pardon for the non-performance of them, according to the tenor of the law. God was good to man before his fall, in making him his creature; he is gracious to man since his fall, in recovering him to the divine favour, by restoring him to the divine likeness. The fabric of grace in the hearts of his people goes up, as did the building of the second temple, with shouts and acclamations, *Grace! grace!* and every stone in the building of our salvation, from the foundation to the superstructure, is all free-stone; *Otherwise grace is no more grace.*

7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded, 8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear) unto this day.

Observe here, 1. What the apostle affirms concerning the main body of the Jewish nation, they obtained not what they sought after; that is, deliverance by the Messiah, justification and righteousness by the works of the law. This they sought, but found not; yet the election hath obtained it; that is, the chosen generation of believers, seeking righteousness and life in a gospel way, namely, by faith in Christ the Mediator, have obtained it. And the rest were blinded; by what, and by whom? Ans. 1. By their own sin and prejudice; and then, 2. By the just judgment of God, leaving them to their own ignorance and obstinacy, for shutting their eyes against the clear light of the gospel; and by giving them over to Satan, the god of this world, who blindeth the eyes of them that believe not, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Observe, 2. The

direful judgment which followed upon this dreadful sin; they shut their eyes, and said, they will not see; God closed their eyes, and said, they shall not see. Because they would not obey the Spirit of God, which would have awakened and enlightened them, God gave them up to a spirit of slumber, stupidity, and blindness; that is, he permitted them to continue and lie under those prejudices against the true Messiah, which they had taken up and entertained in their minds. Learn hence, That no greater judgment can befall a people, than a sottish stupidity of mind and insensibility of spirit; whereby they are drowsily careless of their salvation, and know not the things belonging to their peace, although they be before their eyes. This was the case with the chief body of the Jewish nation, and continues to be still their case: they have eyes, and see not; ears, but hear not, unto this day.

9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompense unto them. 10 Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.

The apostle proceeds here to declare unto us, that the general unbelief and hardness of heart which was found amongst the rejected Jews, was not to be wondered at, because it was prophetically foretold by holy David, in the person of the Messiah, of whom he was a type, that his own people the Jews should extremely injure and wrong him, oppress and vex him: for which wickedness he foretells what dreadful and tremendous judgments should come upon the Jews; namely, *That their table should be made to them a snare, a trap, and a stumbling-block*: that is, that all their pleasant and delightful things should become the instruments of their destruction. *That their eyes be darkened, that they may not see.* The darkening of their eyes signifies the taking away of the judgment and understanding from a people. And *the bowing down of the back alway*, intimates and implies their grovelling upon this earth; their relishing and savouring nothing but earthly things, never lifting up either head or heart to God. Now all this which David spake of the wicked Jews in his time, the apostle applies and adapts to the incredulous and unbelieving Jews in his days, to whom the very preaching of the gospel was an occasion of obduration and hardness of heart. Learn here, 1. That to the obstinate and obdurate enemies of God, the best things become baneful, and

through their own corruption become the instruments and means of their own destruction. *Let their table be made a snare, a trap, and a stumbling-block.* Learn, 2. That to be deprived of the use of our judgment and understanding, especially in things pertaining unto God, is a very dreadful judgment. *Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see.* 3. That imprecations are to be used very warily, and only in weighty matters. These and other expressions of David, which look like imprecations, may as well be accounted prophetic predictions, foretelling what will come upon obstinate sinners, rather than praying that evil may come. Great is the sin and danger of using imprecations lightly, either upon ourselves or others. Some persons use them to gain credit to what they say; but this will not do with wise men, who frequently observe, that persons most guilty are most apt to call for vengeance upon themselves, that they may be thought guiltless. Lord! how do some sinners wish and call for that at which the devils tremble!—I mean damnation. Alas! it slumbereth not; within a moment or two thou shalt feel what thou wilt not fear.

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Our apostle had in the preceding verses proved the rejection of the Jews not to have been total; here he proves, that it shall not be final, but that they shall be generally called before the end of the world. *Have they stumbled*, says he, *that they should fall?* that is, "Have they so stumbled and fallen as never to rise more! Are they utterly forsaken and cast off?" No such thing; but God in his just and righteous judgment hath permitted them to fall, that they having obstinately refused the gospel, it might be preached to the Gentiles; and their receiving of the gospel, God will in his infinite wisdom make use of, to provoke the Jews to jealousy and emulation, seeing themselves so far outstript by those whom they contemned and despised, and in the close make this jealousy and emulation a mean and occasion of the Jews' conversion. Learn hence, That emulation and jealousy doth heat and heighten the mind of man to an eager pursuit of the best things. Observe it in the instance, before us: the salvation of the Gentiles bred emulation in the Jews. "What! say the Jews, shall the Gentiles go away with heaven alone, whom we

thought the vilest people upon earth? Come, let us put in for a part and share in gospel mercies and privileges with them." Thus they were provoked to emulation, and this emulation occasioned their conversion.

12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much move their fulness?

As if the apostle had said, "If the casting off the Jews was so profitable to the Gentile world; if the Gentiles have been such great gainers by occasion of the sin and fall of the Jews; how much more, when they shall become Christians, will they add to the fulness, the glory, and greatness of the Christian church?" Observe here, The wonderful wisdom, the astonishing goodness, the overruling providence and power of God, in causing the fall of the Jews to be the occasion of God's manifesting his abundant grace in the conversion of the Gentiles, and spreading the plentiful knowledge of Christ over all the world; and also in causing the general conversion of the Jews, towards the end of the world, to confirm the faith of the believing Gentiles.

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: 14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation *them which are my flesh*, and might save some of them. 15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what *shall the receiving of them be*, but life from the dead?

Observe here, 1. The honourable office which St. Paul was called to; namely, to be an apostle, and the apostle of the Gentiles. 2. The honour which God put upon him in the faithful execution of that office: (1.) In making him instrumental for calling many of the blind and ignorant Gentiles to the obedience of the faith: And, (2.) In provoking the Jews (whom he called his own flesh, because of his own nation) not to suffer the Gentiles alone to go away with the privileges of the gospel, but to put in for a share with them: *If by any means I may provoke to emulation.* As if the apostle had said, "O that I could once see an holy emulation take hold of my countrymen; that rather than not believe at all, and be saved, I might see them at last believe for anger, or for very shame, and go to heaven in a holy chafe." Observe,

3. What an argument the apostle makes use of, why all persons should greatly desire the general conversion both of Jews and Gentiles to the faith of Christ. As *the casting away of the Jews at present will be the reconciling of the world*: that is, by an occasion of sending the gospel to the Gentiles all the world over, whereby they become reconciled unto God; what will the receiving of the Jews again into the grace and favour of God, and the communion of the visible church, be to you Gentiles, but even as life or resurrection from the dead? Learn hence, 1. That the conversion of the Jews, and the calling in the fulness of the Gentiles, are mercies, much, very much, to be desired and earnestly prayed for. 2. That such will be the blessed state of the church, when the fulness both of Jews and Gentiles are brought into it, that it will be looked upon as a new life, or resurrection from the dead.

16 For if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

Here the apostle produced another argument to prove the universal restoration of the Jews unto the grace and favour of God before the end of the world; and it is drawn from the covenant of God made with Abraham, (as the root of the Jewish nation,) which said, *I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed.* Now the argument runs thus: "As the branches follow the nature of the root, so do the Jews follow the condition of Abraham, and the holy patriarchs, with respect to the outward privileges of the covenant. Was the root holy? so are the branches holy; not inherently, but federally holy, being called, consecrated, and separated from the world unto the service of God. If then Almighty God, by entering into covenant with Abraham, hallowed to himself all his posterity, even as the first-fruits hallowed the whole lump; in like manner will God, in his own good time be so mindful of the Jews, the posterity of Abraham, as to bring them again nigh unto himself in remembrance of his holy covenant; so that they shall be his people, and he will be their God." Learn hence, That the Jews, though at present cast off by God, are still an holy people, they are under an hereditary dedication to God, they have a federal holiness, as descending from holy progenitors, with respect to whom the love and compassion of God are towards them, and they shall in his own time be called and converted by him. And therefore, in the mean time, the Jews are not to look upon themselves with desperation, nor should the Gentiles

look upon them with disdain. *The first-fruits being holy, the lump is also holy: the root being holy, so are the branches also.*

17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree; 18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. 19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. 20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off; and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. 21 For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed lest he also spare not thee.*

The design and scope of our apostle in these words, is to exhort the believing Gentiles not to despise and reproach the rejected and unbelieving Jews: and he draws an argument from the condition of the Gentiles, both past and present: in their past condition they were like a wild olive-tree; in their present condition they were grafted into the true olive. Here note, That by the olive-tree we understand the visible church of God; by the root he means Abraham, he was the root of the olive-tree, the Jewish church. But how so? *Ans.* Not the root by way of communication, but in a way of administration; not by way of communication, as if either Jew or Gentile did receive any sap of spiritual life from him, as branches receive a natural life from the root; for thus Christ alone is the root of the church. But Abraham was the root of the olive-tree in a way of administration, the Lord calling him forth as the first man with whom he was pleased to treat, and enter into covenant with. Again, by the fatness of the olive-tree, we are to understand all outward privileges and ordinances, all spiritual benefits and blessings, which belong to the Jewish church. By the branches of the olive-tree, we are to understand the members of the Jewish church; and by the wild olive, the Gentile world. Now though the Gentiles, through rich grace, were instated in the privileges of the Jews, yet the apostle foresaw, that instead of thankfulness to God for the favours received from him, they would be puffed up with pride, and accordingly he advises them not to be high-minded, but fear; as if he had said, "O ye Gentiles, your state is high, let your hearts be humble. The Jews are fallen; and unless you walk in

holy fear, you cannot stand: unbelief ruined them, take heed that pride doth not ruin you; for the just and holy God is no respecter of persons. He that spared not the natural branches, will no more spare thee." From the whole learn, 1. That man is naturally a very proud creature; and although he has nothing but what he has freely received, yet is prone to boast. 2. That man is especially apt to magnify himself, and to glory over those who are fallen before him, either into sin, or under affliction. 3. That the best preservative from falling, is humility and holy fear. If ever we stand in the day of trial, it is the fear of falling must enable us to stand. Take heed you do not fall, by thinking it is impossible to fall. *Be not high-minded, but fear. Timor tuus, securitas tua;* Thy holy fear will keep thee from falling, when others' security and presumption will lay them on the ground. Let not a man that stands on the top of a tree boast of his height, but look to his hold.

22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness; if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou shalt also be cut off. 23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive-tree?

Our apostle, in these and the following verses, proceeds in his exhortation to the Gentiles, not to insult over the rejected Jews, but to carry it towards them with great modesty and Christian humility; and he useth several arguments by way of motive to excite and quicken them thereunto. The two first are drawn from the severity of God in cutting off the Jews, and the goodness and bounty of God in calling of the Gentiles: *Behold the goodness and severity of God, &c.* Justice and mercy, goodness and severity, are attributes or qualities eminently found in God; and contrary only in their effects upon men. The same God is merciful and severe, with respect to different persons and different qualifications. All mercy is not a virtue, but that which is consistent with other perfections of wisdom and righteousness. The next argument is taken from the condition upon

which the Gentiles hold their present standing in the favour and grace of God; namely, *If they continue in his goodness*; that is, if they walk worthy of this favour from God, and suitably to such a kind and gracious dispensation; otherwise they, the Gentiles, shall be cut off and cast away, as well as the stubborn and unbelieving Jews. The Lord is with a people *only* whilst they are with him; if they serve and seek him, he will be found of them; but if they forsake him, he will cast them off for ever. The next argument to suppress arrogance and pride in the Gentiles, and to prevent their insulting over the fallen Jews, is taken from the hopes of the Jews' restoration; which the apostle proves to be both possible and probable. *They shall be grafted in, if they abide not in unbelief*; for God is able to graft them in again. As if the apostle had said, "The same God that rejected them, is able to restore them, and re-ingraft them; the only obstacle is their unbelief, and this God is also able to remove." Lastly, He shows the probability as well as the possibility of the Jews' conversion; namely, because God had done that which was more unlikely already, to wit, in grafting the Gentiles, who were wild olives, into the true olive, which was more difficult and unlikely than to graft in the Jews again, which were natural branches. The argument runs thus: "If the Gentiles, which were a kind of wild olive-branches, were grafted into a good olive-tree, (the church of God,) which is contrary to nature, seeing men use to graft a good scion into a wild stock, and not a wild scion into a good stock; how much more shall the Jews, which are the natural branches of the good olive, be grafted again into their own olive-tree, to which they formerly did belong! The one is according to the order of nature, but the other is against and contrary to nature." Learn hence, How improbable and unlikely, how difficult and impossible soever, the conversion and calling of the Jews to the Christian religion may seem to us, it is neither contrary to right reason nor true faith. The greatest obstacle in the way of the Jews' conversion to Christianity, it is to be feared, lies in the wicked and scandalous lives of those that call themselves Christians.

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the De-

liverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. 27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

Here the apostle fully proves, that the rejection of the Jews was neither total nor final; not total, because *blindness in part only, happened unto Israel*; that is, part of the Jews only are left in unbelief, and under the power of spiritual blindness. Nor is their rejection final, but for a time only; namely, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in: that is, till the Gentile churches be advanced to an honourable state and fulness. And then all the Israel of God, the faithful seed of Abraham, and the main body of the Jews, shall make up the catholic church, and be saved from their unbelief; according to that gracious promise, Isa. lix. 20, 21. *The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob: and this is my covenant with them, My Spirit shall not depart from thy seed, nor thy seed's seed, from henceforth and forever.* Learn hence, That there shall be a general calling of the Jews to the faith of the gospel before Christ's second coming, is not only possible and probable, but infallible, sure, and certain, and that from the prophecies and predictions of the prophets of God; let us therefore believe it firmly, pray for it fervently, and live in the expectation of it continually.

28. As concerning the gospel, *they are enemies for your sakes*: but as touching the election, *they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.* 29 For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.

Here we have two farther arguments to prove the general conversion of the Jews: the first is taken from the dignity of the Jews, they being the ancient people of God, whose father Abraham he chose, and made his first covenant with him and his seed; and therefore as to making the election of that nation to be an holy people to himself, they are beloved by God for their father's sake; that is, for the sake of Abraham their holy progenitor, who had the honour to be called the friend of God. Though grace descends not from parent to child, yet many times the children of godly parents are very large sharers in outward privileges and blessings for their gracious parents' sake. The Jews here are said to be beloved of God for their father Abraham's sake, whilst for their unbelief and contempt of the gospel, they had rendered themselves the deserved object of God's hatred. The second argument is drawn from the immu-

tability and unchangeable nature of God: *His gifts and callings are without repentance*; that is, although the Jews have rendered themselves unworthy of the favour of God, yet the covenant having been once made with the fathers, and they having had the honour to be his special and peculiar people, God will never repent of his kindness to them, nor of his covenant made with them; but will certainly restore them to their former privileges and happy state; *for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance*. Take the words relatively, and the note is this, "That the gifts and calling of God, whereby he was pleased to adopt the posterity of Abraham, and to engage himself by covenant to them, are inviolable, and such as shall never be reversed or repented of." Observe lastly, the sad and deplorable condition which the Jews are at present in and under; they are enemies to the gospel. *As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake*; that is, because you Gentiles receive the gospel, therefore the Jews reject it, and for that reason are rejected by God. But this happened well to the poor Gentiles; for upon the Jews' refusal, the gospel was brought the sooner to the Gentiles, and they were converted by it.

30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: 31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

Here we have the conclusion of the apostle's argument to prove the conversion and calling of the Jews towards the end of the world. The argument is drawn from a comparison of equals: "If God, after a long time of disobedience, receive the Gentiles to mercy, he will also, after a long time of infidelity, receive the Jews to mercy. If God hath called the Gentiles to his grace after long idolatry, though God never promised to be their God, how much more will he recall his covenant-people from their infidelity in his own appointed time?" So that the argument is from the less to the greater: If the infidelity of the Jews was an occasion of mercy to the Gentiles, much more shall the mercy showed to the Gentiles be an occasion of mercy to the Jews; and consequently their present infidelity shall be no obstacle to their conversion afterward.

32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

That is, "Almighty God hath in wis-

dom and righteousness suffered both Jews and Gentiles successively, for some time, to remain under the power of unbelief and disobedience, that so he might in his own time fulfil the great counsel of his goodness, in showing undeserved mercy unto all, both Jew and Gentile." Now from all the foregoing arguments, for the calling of the Jews, summed up together in this chapter, we may collect and gather, that the conversion of the Jewish nation to the Christian faith, has good foundation in the holy scriptures, and has been the received doctrine of the church of Christ in all ages of the church.

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Here the apostle concludes the chapter with an awful admiration at the depth of the abundant grace and goodness of God in bearing with the infidelity of the Jews, and the obstinacy of the Gentiles; as also of his unsearchable wisdom in making first the rejection of the Jews a mean of calling the Gentiles, and then working upon the obstinate Jews by his mercy unto the Gentiles. *By judgments* here, some understand the degrees and determinations of God's will; by *ways*, the administration of his providence, in order to the execution of those decrees: both which are secret, unsearchable, and unfathomable. There are mysteries of providence, as well as mysteries of faith, and both of them transcend our human understanding.

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

As if the apostle had said, "No creature ever did, or ever can, pierce into the mind of God, nor ever was called to be of his council. No creature ever did or can advise him, nor can any creature challenge God, as if he were indebted to him. Who ever gave any thing to God that he did not first receive from him? Or who can merit any thing at his hands, seeing he owes us nothing? And if so, who hath reason to complain that God deals hardly with the Jews, in rejecting them, and preferring the Gentiles before them? Surely Almighty God may dispense a favour to some, which he owes to none." Learn hence, That in those discriminating favours which God dispenses towards some of the children of men, no other reason can be assigned but his own good will and pleasure. This par-

ingularly appears in his ordering matters relating to the Jews and Gentiles, recorded in the foregoing chapter.

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things : to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

That is, all things are of God, as the author and efficient cause; all things are through him as the providential director, and preserving cause; and all things tend to him, as the ultimate end and final cause: therefore to him all praise, honour, and glory, ought for ever to be ascribed." Learn hence, That God is the first cause, and last end. He is the first cause; that is, he is the cause of all things besides himself, the fountain and original of all created beings; nothing was before him, but all things were created by him, and dependent upon him. And as he is the first cause, so he is the last end, that is, all things tend to him as their ultimate end; their design and aim was the illustration of God's glory, and the manifestation of his divine perfections. And if God be the first cause, let us with humility and thankfulness acknowledge him, admire and adore him, love and serve him, who is the author of our being, and the cause of all other beings. And if he be the last end, let us refer all our actions to his glory; in all our natural actions, our civil actions, but especially in all our religious actions, let the glory of God be our supreme aim, and ultimate end. For if we do not now live unto him, we can never expect hereafter to live with him.

CHAP. XII.

Our apostle having finished the doctrinal part of his discourse, begins here to make application of it. In the former part of his epistle, he had copiously handled the doctrinal points of faith, justification, sanctification, &c. Now from hence to the end of the epistle, there is contained an exhortation to religious and moral duties, as an argument of their sincerity, and as an ornament to their profession.

I BESEECH you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's loving and courteous compellation, *brethren*: so he calls the believing Romans. They were brethren by place and nation, and brethren by religion and profession: *eodem sanguine Christi conglutinati*, cemented together by the blood of Christ, and by the bands of love. Observe, 2. The manner of the apostle's exhortation: it is by way of ob-

servation and entreaty, *I beseech you, brethren*. It imports great lenity and meekness. The apostle did not want authority to command, but uses such humility as to entreat. The minister's work and office is not only to be a teacher, but a beseecher. He must not barely propound and recommend the doctrines of the gospel to his people's understanding, but must endeavour to work upon their wills and affections to embrace and entertain them. The understanding is the leading, but the will the commanding, faculty. Observe, 3. The exhortation itself: *Present your bodies a living sacrifice*. Present your bodies, that is, dedicate your persons, devote yourselves, your whole man, soul and body, to the service of God and his glory. Christians are priests, or a royal priesthood; they offer up themselves in sacrifice unto God, as a whole burnt-offering. Observe, 4. The properties of the Christian sacrifice: it must be voluntary; *present yourselves*. It must be a living sacrifice, an holy sacrifice, a reasonable sacrifice; otherwise it will find no acceptance with God. Observe, 5. The argument or motive which the apostle makes use of, to persuade persons to present and give up themselves to God and his service, and that is drawn from the mercies of God; *I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God*. Learn thence, That the mercies of God, revealed in the gospel, are the most proper, powerful, and effectual argument, to persuade with, and prevail upon, sinners, that have not given up and devoted themselves to God, to do it; and those that have done it, to do it more and more: *I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present yourselves, &c.*

2 And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's dehortation, *Be not conformed to this world*, that is, "Do not fashion or accommodate yourselves to the corrupt principles or customs, to the sinful courses and practices, of the men of the world." The Christian is to walk singularly, and not after the world's guise; he must not cut the coat of his profession according to the fashion of the times, or the honour of the company he falls into. Observe, 2. An apostolical exhortation, *Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind*; that is, "Be ye regenerated and changed in your whole man, beginning at the mind or understanding, by which the Spirit of God worketh upon the inferior faculties of the soul." Every

converted person is truly and really changed, thoroughly sanctified and renewed, endowed with new dispositions and affections; yet this conversion and renovation is not a substantial, but a qualitative change, a change not in the substance of the faculties of the soul, but in the quality of those faculties. And the renewed Christian is sanctified *totus*, but not *totaliter*; he is sanctified thoroughly in all faculties, but not perfectly in all degrees. There is in a renewed man's understanding too much blindness and ignorance, in his will too great obstinacy and perverseness, in his affections too much irregularity and sensuality. Yet such is the indulgence of the gospel, as to call him an holy person, a person transformed by the renewing of his mind. Observe, 3. The reason of the apostle's exhortation, *Be ye transformed, &c. that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*: that is, that he may discern and approve what the will of God is under the gospel, which requires not what is ritually, but what is substantially good, and consequently always acceptable to him. Note here, That opposition to the Levitical ceremonies and ritual injunctions, the apostle styles the gospel institution, the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God; and as such may we love and embrace it, and be found in the delightful practice of it.

3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

The apostle having exhorted to an holy life in general, ver. 1. and to a spiritual renovation of mind, in order to it, ver. 2. comes now to a close exhortation to more particular duties; the first of which is modesty and true humility of mind. This he recommends especially to such who bear any public office in the church, and had received some peculiar and special gifts to fit and furnish them for the discharge of that office. St. Paul here particularly enjoins them, by virtue of his apostolic office, to watch against pride, and haughtiness of mind, not to think themselves wiser or better than they were, but to think soberly and modestly of themselves, according to the truth, and to the degree of faith and wisdom given unto them of God; plainly intimating, that such as are exalted to a degree of eminence in the church above others, are in great danger

of the sin of pride, which it is their duty to watch and pray against, and to be found in the exercise of that humility and lowliness of mind, which is so greatly ornamental to their persons and profession: *Let not any man think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but let him think soberly.*

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Here the apostle lays before us a special reason why the officers of the church should exercise humility towards, and employ their gifts and talents for, the general good and benefit of the church. The argument is drawn from a comparison between the natural body and the mystical body. "As in the natural body there are many members, and every member has its distinct office, the eye to see, the ear to hear, the hand to work, the foot to walk; in like manner, in the mystical body, the church of Christ, there are many members; but each member must keep his own place, and not invade the duty or usurp the office of another, but every one employ his own proper gift to the benefit and comfort of the whole, without disdaining or envying one another." Learn hence, 1. That the church of Christ is one body. 2. That though the body of the church be one, and the Head one, yet the members are many, united to Christ their Head by faith, and to one another by love. 3. That all believers, which are members of this body, have every one his particular gift, his several function, his proper office, which they are duly to execute and perform, without encroaching upon others by proud curiosity, or busy meddling. But as all the members of the body labour jointly together for the preservation of the whole, so ought all the officers and members of the church to keep their distinct stations, and employ and improve regularly their several talents for the mutual edification and benefit of each other, without encroachment or intruding upon the offices of each other. God is a God of order, and hates disorder in his church.

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith: 7 Or ministry, *let us wait on our ministering*; or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on

exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it with simplicity*; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

As if our apostle had said, "Seeing it has pleased God to appoint distinct officers in his church, and to furnish those officers with various degrees of gifts, and not to make all equal either in gifts or office, let every one in general faithfully execute his office, and keep within the limits of his calling, neither neglecting his own duty, nor invading another's; in particular *let him that prophesieth*, that is, expoundeth the scriptures in the church, do it according to the proportion of faith, or according to what is taught plainly and uniformly in the whole scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as the rule of our faith." We must not rack nor wrest the scriptures, to make them speak what we please, but what the prophets and apostles taught, whom we interpret; otherwise we do not expound according to the analogy and proportion of faith. "Let him that ministereth, teacheth, or exhorteth, attend upon that work with all diligence; and he that performs the office of a deacon, (who are called *helpers*, 1 Cor. xii. 28.) and is employed to relieve the poor out of the church's stock, and to take care of strangers, orphans, aged, sick, and impotent persons; *let him do it with simplicity*, that is, without partiality and respect of persons; and *with cheerfulness*, that is, with alacrity of heart, with gentleness in words, with pleasantness of countenance, bearing with the infirmities of the aged, with the loathsomeness of the sick and diseased, and administering with delight to the necessities of all that want." Now from the whole note, 1. That God of his free bounty has beautified his church with divers officers and gifts. Note, 2. That those whom God has bestowed ministerial gifts upon, ought humbly and faithfully to improve them to the church's benefit and education.

9 *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.* 10 *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*

The foregoing exhortations respected church officers in particular; these that now follow concern all Christians in general, and acquaint them with their duties in common conversation. He begins with the grace and duty of love, that being a radical grace, the root from which all

other graces and duties spring and flow. This love to one another, the Holy Ghost requires that it be *without dissimulation*, that is, sincere and unfeigned, not in word and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth; also that it be an affectionate and tender, as well as an unfeigned and sincere love: *Be kindly affectioned one to another.* The word signifies such an affectionate tenderness as a mother bears to the fruit of her womb, and as creatures bear to their young; and no wonder that such a fervent love is required, when laying down our lives for the brethren is commanded, 1 John iii. 16. Likewise, that our love to others do incline us to give preference unto others; really conceiving others to be more worthy of honour than ourselves, and rejoicing to see them placed in a more useful and honourable post than ourselves. Yet observe, Though our love must be hot towards our neighbour, it must not hinder us from abhorring that which is sinful and evil in our neighbour: *Love without dissimulation, and abhor that which is evil.* When we love the persons, we must hate the vices, of men: the love of our friends must not make us in love with their faults; nor must the hatred of men's vices draw us off from delighting in, and cleaving to, that which is good in any man: *Abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good.*

11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord:

The next duty exhorted to, is diligence and industry in all our duties both to God and man, but particularly in the duties of our calling. We must avoid the two extremes of slothfulness on the one hand, and excessive dudgey on the other, in the management of our secular affairs and worldly business. But in the service of God we must be *fervent*, as in the service of the world we must not be slothful. What is done for the world, is best done with indifference; but what is done for God, is best done with warmth and fervency, or not done at all. Our most ardent affections and active powers must be employed in his service; for, to be cold and careless therein, disparages his excellency, and will defeat our own expectation. We must be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; and may not be slothful in business, serving the world.

12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

The apostle next directs the converted Romans how they should manage themselves under afflictions; namely, to endure

them patiently, to rejoice in hope of present deliverance, or future happiness; and, in order to both, to be much in the duty of prayer. Learn hence, that hope, patience, and prayer, are powerful supports under all afflictions, and will render them not only tolerable, but joyous. By patience, we possess ourselves; by hope, we possess God; by prayer, we are enabled unto both.

13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

The next duty exhorted to, is that of charity and alms-giving to the poor members of Jesus Christ, especially when under persecution; showing hospitality towards them, and giving entertainment to them, when they seek it of us. Learn, 1. That charity to all persons, but especially to the persecuted members of Jesus Christ, is a necessary and important duty. Learn, 2. That hospitality is an eminent part of Christian charity; true hospitality, I mean, which is accompanied with prudence and sobriety. There is a wide difference between riotous house-keeping and true hospitality; the latter is always designed for the help of the poor, and particularly for the godly poor. There are great house-keepers who are not good house-keepers; because their house-keeping is for the great, rather than the good, not for the household of faith, especially not for the poor of that household. As to spirituals, God fills the hungry with good things, but sends the rich empty away; whereas, most men, as to corporals, fill the rich with their good things, with the fat and the sweet; but send the poor, if not empty away, yet relieved only with the sweepings of their table. This is not according to the precept before us; *Distributing to the necessities of the saints, and given to hospitality.*

14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

The apostle having taught us our duty to our friends in the former verse, teacheth us our duty here towards our enemies. *Bless them that persecute you:* that is, pray for them, and wish well to them, whatever provocation you may have to the contrary. Learn hence, 1. That good men must make account of, and prepare for, persecution; either the persecution of the tongue, or of the hand, or of both. Learn, 2. That it is their duty ever to bless, never to curse, their persecutors and opposers; *Bless, but curse not.* Where note, That the apostle doubles the exhortation, *Bless your persecutors, bless and curse not.* This doubling the exhortation, shows both the difficulty of the

duty, how contrary it is to corrupt nature; and also the constancy of the duty, we must ever bless, and never curse: always wish well, never any ill, to the worst of men. Take we great heed of giving way to secret wishes of hurt to our enemy. God forbid we should hurt ourselves by sinful passion, because others hurt us by slander and false accusation. We are naturally prone to speak ill of others, and to wish ill to others, with delight; this sin persisted in shuts out of heaven, as well as murder.

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

The next duty required, is Christian sympathy and mutual affection between brethren, both in prosperity and adversity, to rejoice in the one, and to mourn together in the other, as being members of the same body. Teaching us, that it is a Christian's duty to rejoice in those good things, whether inward or outward, which befall his brethren; and also to mourn and lay to heart all those afflictions and sorrows, whether inward or outward, which come upon them. But, Lord! how far are they from this duty, who, instead of mourning for the sufferings of others, are glad at calamity, rejoice at the downfall of others! O, help us to lay the troubles of others to heart, when we ourselves are freest and farthest from trouble: let us *weep with them that weep, and rejoice with, &c.* The gospel acquaints us with the pity of God towards us, and presseth us to pity one another.

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

These words, *be ye of the same mind one towards another*, are an exhortation to unity among Christians. This is threefold; an unity of the head, or an unity of judgment and opinion; an unity of the heart, or an unity in love and affection; and an unity of the tongue, which is an unity of expression. Happy we! when in all these respects we are of the same mind one towards another. Observe next, The hindrances of mutual concord and unity among Christians: and they are two, 1. Pride, *Mind not high things.* 2. Arrogancy, *Be not wise in your own conceits.* *Mind not high things;* that is, mind not preferment, nor riches, nor vain-glory, but be content with and thankful for a middle state and condition in the world; which is far more eligible and desirable than a state of riches, plenty, and abundance, as being less liable to

temptations. And be not wise in your own conceits; that is, entertain humble thoughts of your own knowledge, think it not greater than it is; take heed of an over-weening opinion of your own wisdom, as if you wanted neither divine assistance and guidance, nor yet the advice and counsel of your brethren. Man is naturally a proud creature; but more proud of the endowments of his mind, than of those that adorn his body.

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

By *evil* here, we are to understand wrongs and private injuries; by *not recompensing* them, is meant not revenging them. Corrupt nature is very prone to return wrong for wrong, one ill turn for another, but Christianity sets a nobler pattern before us, even the example of him, "who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not," 1 Pet. ii. 23. *Provide things honest in the sight of all men.* Having exhorted them before to be careful of their conversations towards God, he now presses them to be watchful over their conversations before the world, that by honesty and innocency of life they may cut off all occasion from the enemies of religion to speak evil of them, and their holy profession; that all their words and actions be justifiable and unexceptionable, to that degree that the heathens may be in love with Christianity, by observing their lives and actions to be holy and honest. Learn hence, That a Christian must carefully look, not only to his conscience, but to his conversation; that his conscience be holy and upright in the sight of God, and his conversation honest and unblameable before men. The world cannot discern our hearts, but they can soon discover the errors of our lives, and will throw the dirt of our sins upon religion's face; therefore we had need *provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Observe here, 1. The duty directed and exhorted to, namely, peaceableness; *Live peaceably*, that is, be of a peaceable temper, and follow those things which make for peace. Observe, 2. The extent and latitude of this duty: *With all men live peaceably*; not with friends only, or with those of your own judgment and persuasion, but with men of disagreeing humours and interests, with men of different principles

and apprehensions, from you. Again observe, 3. A double restriction and limitation with which it is bounded: first, *If it be possible*, implying, that there is a sort of men in the world who make peace impossible; but for others, if it may be enjoyed upon honest terms, though upon hard terms, we must not stick at them, always remembering that peace and truth are two precious things, which can never be bought too dear, if they be not purchased with sin and baseness. The second restriction follows, *As much as in you lieth*: now this respects our endeavours, not our success. If we follow peace with all men, though we cannot overtake it, yet we shall not miss of our reward in pursuing it. Peace is the most important duty, a singular benefit and blessing, which every Christian is bound to pursue and promote, and that with all men: *If it be possible, &c.*

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves; but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Observe here, How the apostle renews his exhortation to all Christians to watch against the sin of private and personal revenge; he urged it before, ver. 17. he reinforces it here, ver. 19. thereby showing how prone our corrupt natures are to commit this sin, and how hard the contrary duty is to flesh and blood. The heathens reckoned revenge to be a part of justice, and ranked it amongst the number of their virtues; but the scriptures require, that instead of revenging an injury, we remit and forgive it. *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves*: it follows, *rather give place unto wrath*. What wrath? or whose wrath? *Ans.* Give place to your own wrath, say some interpreters; give way a little, and turn aside from the person you are angry with, and do not suffer your anger to hurry you away to revenge. Give place to the wrath of those that wrong you, say others; decline their wrath, and give not word for word, which will but add fuel to the fire, and oil to the flame. But it seems best to understand it of God's wrath: leave the matter to God, he will right your cause; do not take God's work out of his hand, but suffer him to come in with his wrath upon your enemies, who wrong and injure you; rather give place to the wrath of God against them, for vengeance is his, and he will repay it. Learn hence, That such, who having suffered wrong, do seek to revenge themselves, take revenging work out of God's hand; whereas, if they leave

the matter with God, his justice will right them fully.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

As if the apostle had said, "Instead of revenge, render kindness; return courtesies for injuries, affability for affronts: *If thy enemy hunger, feed him.*" The words, as some critics observe, signify to feed cheerfully and tenderly, as birds feed their young ones. *So doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.* By coals of fire, 1. Some understand, an heart-melting fire: as if the apostle had said, "By thy kindness thou wilt melt and mollify his spirit towards thee, as hardest metals are melted by coals of fire: it must be a very stony heart indeed that this fire will not melt, a very disingenuous nature that meekness will not mollify. Clemency will melt an enemy, and even force him by a sweet compulsion to become a friend, though of a rough and rugged disposition." 2. By coals of fire heaped upon the head, others understand a sin-punishing fire. *Thou shalt heap coals of fire,* that is, the fire of divine vengeance, upon his head, by making his malice and hatred against thee more inexcusable. Learn hence, 1. That to conquer and overcome an enemy by love and kindness, is a noble conquest; and a glorious victory, to melt him down by obliging favours into a good affection. Learn, 2. That if an enemy, after such kind offices, will persevere in his enmity against us, the event will certainly be this: by our patience towards him, and forbearance of him, we shall engage the wrath of God against him, and heap coals of fire, that is, the divine vengeance, upon him.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Learn hence, That every Christian should not only take heed that he be not overcome of evil: but also labour and endeavour what in him lieth to overcome evil with good. *Quest.* What are we to understand here by evil? *Ans.* Any unkind or injurious dealings from others, any mischief or ill turn which our neighbour has done us. *Quest.* What is it to be overcome of evil? *Ans.* 1. When we dwell in our thoughts too much, too often, and too long, upon the injuries and unkindnesses we have met with. This is, as if a man that was to take down a bitter pill should be continually champing of it, and rolling it under his tongue. 2. We are overcome of evil, when we are brought over to commit the

same evil, by studying to make spiteful returns by way of revenge for the injuries we have received. *Quest.* Wherein consists the duty and excellency of overcoming evil with good? *Ans.* It renders us like to God, who does good to us daily, though we do evil against him continually, hereby we imitate God in one of the choicest perfections of his divine nature; hereby we overcome ourselves; hereby we overcome our enemies; and make them become our friends. *Quest.* How should we overcome evil with good? *Ans.* By doing good for evil, by returning courtesies for injuries, speaking well of others, although they speak hardly, yea, very ill of us.

CHAP. XIII.

The apostle having treated of moral duties in the former chapter, treats of political duties in this, proving that magistracy is God's ordinance, for the good of human society, and enforcing the duty of subjection unto magistrates, in obedience to the commandment of God.

LET every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Observe here, 1. The title given to magistrates, they are *powers, higher powers*, that is, persons invested with power, and placed in supreme authority over us. All mankind is not of one rank, doth not stand upon an equal level. Magistracy is an eminency or superiority of some persons above others. Observe, 2. The original fountain from whence all power is derived, and that is, God himself: *There is no power but of God*, that is, all power is derived from God, and is to be used for God; the magistrate acts by his authority, and consequently is to act for his interest, honour, and glory. It is agreeable to the will of God, that there should be such a thing as magistracy and government in the world; and it is his appointment that men should be governed by men deriving the power and authority from him: *The powers that be are ordained of God.* Observe, 3. The apostle's strict injunction for subjection unto magistracy, as a divine ordinance: *Let every soul be subject*, that is, every person, be he of what rank, or in what station he will, high or low, honourable or ignoble, rich or poor, clergy or laity, he must be subject to God's ordinance. Where note, That Christ is a friend to Caesar, and Christianity no enemy to loyalty: the best Christians are always the best subjects; none so true to their prince, as they that are most faithful to their God. Obedience to magistrates is both the duty of Christians, and the interest of Christianity.

2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

The forementioned duty of subjection unto magistracy, insisted upon in the foregoing verse, the apostle urges and enforces upon all Christians, by sundry arguments in this and the foregoing verses; as, namely, 1. From the sinfulness of resistance: *They resist the ordinance of God; they make war upon God himself; he that rebelleth against his prince, is a rebel also to his God. From the danger of resistance: They shall receive to themselves damnation.* That is, 1. Temporal judgment from the hand of the magistrate, to whom the sword is committed, as Korah, Absalom, and others, did experience. 2. Eternal punishment from the hand of God, who will plead the cause, and vindicate the honour of his vicegerents and representatives here on earth, and cast those into hell who pour contempt upon them, if sincere repentance by a timely interposure prevent it not.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

Here we have a further argument for subjection to rulers and governors, drawn from the end of the magistrate's office, which is to punish vice, and to promote virtue: *Rulers are not a terror to good works; that is, they ought not, and they ordinarily are not; they were not ordained for that end, and it is not their place so to be, namely, a terror to the good, but to the bad only; for God giveth no authority against himself, or his own righteous laws, which require the punishing of the bad, and the rewarding of the good.* Learn hence, 1. That magistrates, by virtue of their place, ought to be a terror, or exceeding terrible, to evil works, and evil workers. Learn, 2. That magistrates are not terrible, but amiable, to good men; they fear rulers, but it is with a fear of reverence, not with a tormenting, servile fear: *Do that which is good, and thou shalt not be afraid of the power.*

4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Here the apostle subjoins a reason, why a magistrate is not to be unduly dreaded and feared by his subjects who live well, for he is by his institution the minister of God to thee for good, if thou beest a doer of that which is good. Learn hence, That the magistrate is the minister of God for the good of them over which he is set, especially of them that are virtuous and good: he is a shield to the godly, a husband to the widow, a father to the orphan, a patron to the poor, and a refuge to the oppressed. Observe farther, How the magistrate is set forth with the ensign of terror to evil-doers: he has a sword put into his hand by God himself, a sword to wound; not a wooden dagger to scare offenders barely; and a sword, not rusting in the scabbard, but drawn and whetted; he must show it, and strike with it upon a just occasion, and make those feel it who are not awed with the sight of it: *He beareth not the sword in vain.* Observe again, Though the magistrate is said to bear a sword, yet he is never called a sword, but a shield often; a shield is for defence, a sword for destruction; intimating, that the magistrate's power should rather be executed in protecting than in punishing, rather in saving than in destroying. The primary design of the magistrate's power is protection, not destruction; magistrates have swords, but they are shields, and not swords: they have a sword to cut off evil-doers; God help them to draw it upon atheism and blasphemy, upon vice and immorality. One hearty stroke of the magistrate's sword would stun error and vice more than a thousand sermons. Observe lastly, The magistrate is said not to snatch or take the sword, but to bear the sword. He doth not wrest it out of the hand of another, but it is put into his hand by God himself: the commission to bear the sword is from God; the magistrate doth not hold his authority by virtue of the sword, but he holds his sword by virtue of his authority. When he draweth the sword, it is not merely backed with an arm of flesh, but with a warrant and commission signed by God himself: *He beareth the sword.*

5 Wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

Here the apostle doth again assert the necessity of subjection to the civil magistrate. Seeing that magistracy is God's ordinance, for the good of human society; seeing that the sword in the magistrate's hand is backed and edged with God's authority; therefore there is a necessity of subjection unto magistracy and magis-

trates, and that for a double reason—for fear of wrath and punishment from man, and from a principle of conscience in obedience to the command of God. *We must be subject, not only for wrath*, that is, not only for fear of man's wrath, but *for conscience sake*; that is, with respect to the command of God, which has made subjection our indispensable duty.

6 For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

From the duty of subjection unto magistrates, the apostle proceeds to urge and enforce the duty and necessity of paying tribute to them, or allowing them an honourable maintenance, for and towards the support of the government which they sustain and bear. The payment of taxes and tribute to the supreme magistrate is necessary upon several accounts: 1. As it is an acknowledgment of the power which God hath set over us. 2. As it tends to the support of the government which we live under. 3. As it is a small recompence for the governor's continual care and industry, he *attending*, that is, watching perpetually, and taking pains continually, for procuring and maintaining the good and happiness of his subjects; and therefore both duty and obligation, both religion and gratitude, do bind and engage us to aid and assist him, and, so far as it is in our power, to requite and reward him for his care of the common safety, and regard to the public good.

7 Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is *due*, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.

A twofold duty towards magistrates is here laid down by our apostle, namely, maintenance and reverence. 1. There is due unto them maintenance. Tribute and custom is payable to them for that purpose, and not without great reason and obligation: *for he is the minister of God for our good*, that is, an instrument under God to preserve our blessings to us, and farther, because such supplies are necessary to defray those vast expenses, which they are constrained to be at, for the security and welfare of their subjects. Taxes, tribute, and custom, are not so much gifts as due debts to princes, which by the command of God are to be justly and cheerfully paid unto them, and which cannot without sin and injustice be denied to them, or purloined from them. To cheat our prince, is as great a sin in the sight

of God as to rob our father, though few think it so: *Render tribute to whom tribute is due*. Again, 2. There is reverence as well as maintenance due to magistrates: *Render fear to whom fear, and honour to whom honour*, is due. Fear denotes inward reverence, and honour outward respect: fear is the magistrate's due by reason of his authority, and honour by reason of his dignity. Here note, That the apostle is thus particular and express in asserting the rights of princes and assigning the proper duties of subjects towards them, because the Jews held opinions which were destructive of all civil government; as, namely, that they being the only people of God, God alone was to be owned as their Lord and Governor, and none under him but such as should be immediately chosen by him; and, as a consequent of this, they refused to pay tribute to Caesar, looking upon that as a token of subjection to him. Therefore the apostle here presses the Christians at Rome to show their freedom from, and opposition to, all such pernicious principles, and to give the world a convincing proof that Christianity makes the best men, the best magistrates, the best subjects, of any religion in the world.

8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law.

Our apostle having finished his exhortation to duty towards our superiors, comes now to enforce the duties which we owe unto our neighbours; the first of which is, to render and pay to every one what is due unto him. Moral duties are mutual debts which we owe one to another; one of which, namely, that of love, we can never fully discharge, but must be ever paying, yet always owing: *Owe nothing to any man but love*, implying that must be always owing. The truth is, this debt of love is so far from a possibility of being paid on earth, that it is due in heaven to God, angels, and saints; *There abideth charity*, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. All other debts may be paid whilst we live; but this of love cannot be satisfied while we live. Observe next, The argument, reason, or motive, to excite unto this duty, and that is drawn from the excellency of this grace of love: *He that loveth, hath fulfilled the law*; that is, he that loveth his neighbour as he should and ought to do, in deed and in truth, out of a pure heart fervently, he hath *fulfilled the law*, that is, the law relating to his neighbour, the duties of the second table are fulfilled.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit

adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Two particulars are here observable, namely, a proposition asserted, that *love is the fulfilling of the law*. "And this proposition proved by an induction and enumeration of particular duties belonging to the second table. Observe, 1. The proposition asserted and maintained by the apostle, ver. 8. and 10. namely, that *love is the fulfilling of the law*. "But can the law be said to be fulfilled by us? If so, in what sense?" *Ans.* By the law here we are certainly to understand that branch of the moral law which respects our duty to our neighbour. All our duty to men is virtually comprehended in loving them as ourselves; as no man will hurt himself, so neither will he hurt his neighbour, if he loveth him as himself: thus love is the complement or fulfilling of the law relating to our neighbour. The church of Rome would infer from hence, That a person may keep the law of God perfectly, and without the least deficiency. But observe, He that loveth keepeth the law. How keepeth? Even as he loveth; if he loveth perfectly, he keepeth the law perfectly; but if his love be imperfect, (as is the best on this side heaven,) then is his fulfilling of the law imperfect also. Perfect fulfilling of the law is what we should labour after, but whilst in an imperfect state we cannot attain unto; yet such is the grace of God in the gospel, as to account sincerity instead of perfection, and to esteem unfeigned love to our neighbour the fulfilling of the law, or all the duties of the second table. Observe, 2. This proposition is proved by an induction and enumeration of particular duties belonging to the second table: *Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, nor bear false witness, nor covet*. Where all injury is forbidden to be done to our neighbour, in his name, in his estate, marriage right, &c. and this is called the fulfilling of the law. "But how can that be? Is the law fulfilled by mere negatives, by doing no hurt to our neighbours? Is not doing them all the good we can, required also?" *Ans.* Yes, no doubt: *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour*, it is implied, that love doth all possible good to his neighbour, as well

as worketh no evil; though the negatives only are mentioned, yet the affirmatives also are included.

11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

Here begins the last part of the chapter, which treats of our duty towards ourselves, namely, sobriety, temperance, mortification of sin, and all the works of darkness, such as rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, and the like; and the argument or motive which the apostle uses in this verse to excite and quicken the converted Romans to the last-mentioned duties, is drawn from the consideration of their present state and condition; they were believers, the gospel light was risen upon them, and they were nearer salvation now than when they first believed: *Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed*. This, by the way, is a meditation full of comfort to a gracious person; every breath he draws, draws him a degree nearer to perfect happiness; he is nearer heaven, nearer his reward, than when in the infancy of his faith; therefore let him gird up the loins of his mind, and be more cheerful and more laborious in the Lord's work. Lord! how transporting is it to thy faithful ones, to consider how small a matter is betwixt them and their complete salvation! No sooner is their breath gone, but the full desire of their souls is come; their salvation is near, very near, much nearer than when they first believed. But, O! what a meditation of terror is it to a wicked person! his damnation is near, and every hour nearer and nearer; there is but a puff of breath betwixt him and hell; ere long his last breath and his last hope will expire together. Lord! give sinners heart to consider, that a graceless man ere long will be a hopeless man; the state he was born in was sad, the state he is now in is worse, but the state he will shortly be in, without conversion, will be unspeakably worst of all: his damnation is near, it slumbereth not.

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. 13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

(Observe here, 1. The apostle puts the Romans in mind of their former state be-

fore conversion, when the night of heathenish ignorance and darkness was upon them, when they spent their time and strength in rioting and drunkenness, in lasciviousness and wantonness. Where note, The odious character wherewith sin is branded; it is darkness, a work of darkness; so styled, because sin originally springs from darkness, because it naturally delights in darkness, because it ultimately leads to eternal darkness. Observe, 2. How he puts them in mind of their present state and condition since the day-star of the gospel did dawn upon them, *The night is far spent, and the day is at hand*: that is, the night of heathenish ignorance, blindness and darkness, is in a great measure past and over, and the day of grace and salvation is come unto you; gospel light is among you, illuminating grace and saving knowledge is now found with you. Observe, 3. The duties enjoined answerable to the privileges enjoyed; and that is, to walk as the children of day, soberly, righteously, and godly, abstaining from all intemperance and excess of every kind, and being clothed with all Christian virtues and graces, which are called *armour of light*. Armour, because they defend us against the assaults of sin, Satan, and the world, and all our spiritual enemies whatsoever; and armour of light, because such Christian graces are bright and shining in the eyes of the world. Learn hence, 1. That the enjoyment of gospel-light lays a person or a people under special obligations to cast off the works of darkness. 2. That such as enjoy the light and liberty of the gospel, ought to walk as becometh the gospel which they do enjoy; that is, according to the precepts and commands of the gospel, answerable to the privileges and prerogatives of the gospel, answerable to the helps and supplies of grace which the gospel affords, and answerable to those high and glorious hopes which the gospel raises the Christian up to the expectation of: *This is to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light, &c.*

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Observe here, the apostle doth not say, as a moral philosopher would have said, "Instead of rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, put on temperance, put on sobriety, put on chastity, and so set a single virtue against a single vice; but, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, seek by faith union with him, that so you may derive virtue from him, to enable you

unto holy walking before him. Set the doctrine and life of Christ continually before you; follow every instruction, and imitate all the parts of his holy conversation, even as the garment is commensurate to the body: *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.*" May not the expression imply, 1. That the soul of man, since the fall, is in a naked state, destitute of those divine graces of the Holy Spirit, which were its original clothing in the day of undefiled innocence? 2. That Jesus Christ is our spiritual clothing? (1.) In his righteousness, to pardon and justify us; he is our clothing, to cover the guilt of sin out of God's sight. (2.) In his grace, to sanctify us, by which he cleanses us from our sin's pollution and filthiness. 3. That Jesus Christ, in order to our spiritual clothing, must be put on by faith: an unapplied Christ justifies none, saves none. It was not sufficient under the law that the blood of the sacrifice was shed, but it was also to be sprinkled, in order to the expiation of guilt. The personal application of Christ's blood by faith on our part, is as absolutely necessary to salvation as is the shedding of his blood on his part, in order to our remission and salvation. *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.* It follows, *And make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.* Observe, the apostle doth not say, *Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the necessities and the necessary desires thereof.* But, *to fulfil the lusts, or inordinate desires thereof.* Then only is provision for the flesh sinful and unlawful, when it is sought more to satisfy its appetite, and to gratify the inordinate desires, than to strengthen and fit us for our duty to God and man. In this latter sense, to make provision for the flesh, is to furnish our enemy with arms and ammunition to fight against ourselves. Interpretatively, he makes provision for his lusts, that doth not provide against them; he feeds his lusts, that doth not starve them; he nourishes and strengthens his lusts, that doth not mortify and kill them. Explicitly and directly, men provide for their lusts by entertaining such thoughts in their minds as do kindle, excite, and stir up lust; and when those thoughts are gratified with desires, and those desires accompanied with endeavours; but worst and saddest of all it is, when men's desires to gratify their lusts are turned into prayers unto God Almighty in order to that end. Thus the apostle James, iv. 3. *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* Learn hence, 1. That a sober and moderate use of the creatures which God has given us, not barely for necessity,

but delight, is allowable, and a commended duty. Learn, 2. That to make use of the comforts of life, not to satisfy our natures, but to gratify our lusts and inordinate desires, is a perverting of God's intention in bestowing the supports of life upon us, and a very heinous sin. Make we then no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

CHAP. XIV.

The apostle having laid down those positive duties in the foregoing chapters, in which the life and spirit of christianity do so eminently consist, comes here, in this chapter, to treat of things of an indifferent nature, neither commanded nor forbidden by any divine law; and to speak of the right use of our Christian liberty. It seems, some of the believing Jews at Rome, apprehended that the observation of the ceremonial law, as to meats and days, was yet to be continued. On the other hand, the believing Gentiles, being fully persuaded of their freedom by Christ, refused communion with the Jews that lived after that manner. Hereupon a great dissension arose between them, the Gentiles looking upon the Jews as superstitious, and the Jews censuring the Gentiles as profane. Now St. Paul comes with his bucket to quench this flame, which burnt so vehemently in the church; admonishing the believing Jews not to condemn the believing Gentiles, and exhorting the believing Gentiles not to refuse communion with the believing Jews; and thus by a mutual forbearance of each other, to hold the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

HIM that is weak in the faith, receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations.

Observe here, 1. The person described, whom the apostle recommends to their charity and forbearance: *Him that is weak in the faith.* Not him that is sick unto death through fundamental error, but one that is sound in the faith, though weak in judgment; men of honest hearts, but weak heads. Observe, 2. Here is an injunction of charity and Christian forbearance towards these weak ones: *Receive them,* take them into your houses, yea, into your hearts; receive them into your society, into your communion, and let not difference in judgment cause any distance in affection. Observe, 3. The limitation of this instruction: *Receive him, but not by doubtful disputations:* that is, "Do not quarrel or contend with him about his opinions, or fill his head full of curious and intricate questions, or trouble him with doubtful disputes." Learn hence, that Christians are to receive such as are weak in the faith, into their hearts by love, without troubling their heads with perplexing disputes. Weak Christians cannot well judge of arguments; and practical piety, and Christian love, will much sooner rectify the judgment of the weak, than fierce argumentations.

2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. 3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

Here the apostle declares the ground of difference that was between them; namely, the difference of meats. One thought all meats to be lawful under the gospel; another, rather than eat any meats forbidden by the law, will eat only herbs. Where observe, How the church of God, in all ages, has been strangely divided about little and indifferent things. What jars and stirs were there between the eastern and western churches about the observation of Easter; about celebrating the Lord's supper with leavened or unleavened bread! And, verily, the fatal evils which our hot contentions have occasioned amongst ourselves, only about indifferent rites and ceremonies, tears of blood are not sufficient to bewail. Observe next, The apostle's exhortation to the two contending parties, not to vilify or set at nought one another, condemning each other as humorous and scrupulous, much less as obstinate and wilful; but especially, not upon this occasion to separate from, or break communion with, each other. Let not him that eateth all kinds of meats *despise* him that through weakness durst not eat of any. As if the apostle had said, "Whilst there is error in our understandings, weakness in our judgments, narrowness in our faculties, differences will arise in the church of God: but take care that where there is not compliance, that yet there may be peace. Despise not, judge not one another." Observe lastly, the reason offered by the apostle, why they should receive their weak brother; because *God hath received him.* God, that is most holy, and hateth sin, receiveth such; therefore so must you, if you please God. Why should you refuse to hold communion with such as hold communion with God?

4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

Another reason is here produced why we should not rashly censure or judge our brother differing in judgment from us about lesser things; namely, because he is God's servant; and it is God's sentence

and not ours, which he must stand or fall by. And if these differences shall not hinder God's acceptance of him to salvation, why should they hinder us in accepting of him into our communion? To love, is our duty: to judge, is God's prerogative: Let us be more in charity, and less in censure. Learn hence, That the scripture forbids us to judge one another as having no grace, for the doing or not doing of those things which are consistent with a present state of grace.

5 One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord; for he giveth God thanks: and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

The second case, as to indifferent things, is about the observation of days. Many of the believing Jews could not be taken off from solemnizing those feasts which were of God's own founding and instituting among the Jews. Another looked upon them truly as abrogated by Christ. Now the apostle advises, that neither the one nor the other, neither he that regardeth, nor he that regardeth not those days, should be judged, or hardly censured for so doing, because he acts therein according to the direction of his conscience. He that according to his light doth either eat or not eat such meats, keep or not keep such days, intends or designs it as an act of obedience to God; praying for, and giving thanks unto Almighty God for his acceptance. So then, if they both aim at the same end, they ought not to condemn one another for each other's act. Learn hence, That persons disagreeing with us, and differing from us in lesser things, from a real principle of conscience, firmly persuaded that what they do, or refuse to do, is for the glory of God, and out of a sincere desire to please him, ought not to be judged by us, but left to the righteous judgment of the heart-searching God.

7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. 8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

Here our apostle proves what he had before asserted, that Christians in their particular actions have a special regard to the Lord and his honour, because they devote themselves, living and dying, to the service of him, and his glory: *None of us, Christians, lives unto himself*, but we spend our lives in his service; neither do we die unto ourselves, nor when we please, but when he appoints: therefore *living or dying* we are his. From the words, absolutely considered, we may learn, That the best evidence we can have that we are Christ's servants, is this, when we make our aim and scope, our design and care, to live and to die unto Christ our Lord, and not unto ourselves. *Quest.* "But when may we be said to live unto the Lord, and to die unto the Lord?" *Ans.* When we do not frame our lives after our own wills, but according to the word and will of God, making that the rule and ground of all our actions; when the great end why we desire life, is to do service for Christ on earth, and to be fitted by him for the fruition of him in heaven. Finally, then we live and die unto the Lord, when we are willing to be at the disposal of God, both for life and death; and this as to time, manner, and means; yea, all circumstances whatsoever, both of life and death. When a man is willing to lay down his life for the Lord, or at the call of the Lord, it is a certain evidence that he liveth and dieth to the Lord.

9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. 10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. 11 For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Three things are here observable: 1. That Jesus Christ, by virtue of his meritorious passion, and glorious resurrection, was constituted Lord of all things, and has power to judge all persons. *To this end Christ died, rose again, and revived*, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living: that is, be the judge and rewarder of all mankind. Observe, 2. That to this supreme and absolute Lord every one of us must give an account of our actions, and from him receive our final doom: *We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ*.

Observe, 3. The argument which the apostle draws from hence to dissuade us from censuring and judging one another; and that is drawn from the consideration of the last and final judgment, which we are all hastening apace unto. *Why dost thou judge thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.* As if the apostle had said, "Let there be a mutual forbearance among Christians: do not rashly judge and uncharitably censure one another, because in some little things you differ from each other. What though your brother cannot in conscience comply with your opinion or practice; must you presently accuse him of stomach, and condemn him for stubbornness, calling his non-compliance obstinacy and humour, pride and singularity, which he calls *conscience towards God*? Remember the judge standeth at the door, and you must suddenly stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; *where every one of us must give an account of himself to God.*" Where note, The universality of the subjects rendering this account: *Every one of us.* The subject-matter of which the account must be rendered; and that is of *ourselves*. As also the designation and description of the person unto whom this account must be rendered; and that is, to the all-seeing and heart-searching God; to God the Creator, but especially to Christ the Lord, the Redeemer, who is such a judge as the power of the mightiest cannot daunt; such a judge as the riches of the wealthiest cannot bribe; such a judge as the subtilty of the wisest cannot delude; such a judge as there is no appealing from, no repealing of his sentence: *Therefore judge nothing before the time, till the Lord cometh.*

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge the rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way. 14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean. 15 But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. 16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle advises persons to be very cautious in the use of their Christian liberty: *Put not a stumbling-block, or an occasion of falling, into your brother's way.* Learn thence, That to

use our Christian liberty when it may be an occasion of sin, by laying a stumbling-block before others, although we do not use it with an intent or purpose to make them stumble, is very sinful. Observe, 2. The apostle's final determination concerning those meats which some of the Jews scrupled as unclean: *I am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself.* The difference and distinction of meats, as clean and unclean, was taken away by our Lord Jesus Christ. Observe, 3. That although the apostle pronounces that there is no meat unclean in itself, yet notwithstanding this, to him that esteemeth any thing unclean, to him, as to the use of it, it is unclean. Observe, 4. With what tenderness the apostle directs all Christians to carry themselves towards their weaker brethren, even to the abridging themselves of their lawful liberty in the use of indifferent things, rather than give the weak an occasion of offence. *If thy brother be grieved with thy meat,* (though no meat be unclean of itself,) yet in eating thou doest amiss, for three reasons: (1.) Because it is against the laws of charity so to act in things indifferent: *If thy brother be grieved, now walkest thou uncharitably.* (2.) Because it is the way to occasion him to sin, and consequently to do what in us lies to bring destruction upon him, for whom Christ died: *Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.* (3.) Because eating thus with offence to the weak, causeth Christian liberty, purchased by Christ, to be evil spoken of before the world: *Let not then your good be evil spoken of.* The sum of the whole is this, To show how uncharitable, unsafe, and unchristian a thing it is, to make such an undue use of our Christian liberty, as may occasion our weak brother to fall or stumble.

17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

That is, "The spiritual kingdom of God and Christ in the world consisteth not in these little things of meat and drink, but in *righteousness* towards God and our neighbour; in *peace*, that is, in peaceableness of disposition, in Christian love, concord, and unity; and in *joy in the Holy Ghost*, that is, in the joyful sense of the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. In these things Christianity consists." Learn hence, That the essence of Christianity, and the life of religion, is far from consisting in little and indifferent things: and therefore for persons to lay a mighty stress upon them one way or the other, is neither wise nor safe. Learn, 2. That righteous-

ness and holiness, charity and peaceableness, love and joy, and such like fruits of the Holy Spirit; these are the great things wherein Christianity, or the kingdom of Christ, consists, and in which the life and soul of religion is found: *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

18 For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God and approved of men.

He that in these things, that is, in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, serveth Christ, is acceptable to God. That is, this shows and evidences that he is a person accepted with God, and approved of men, of wise, charitable, and good men; yea, the natural consciences of men in general will applaud and approve what is done by him, notwithstanding the fore-mentioned difference in lesser things concerning meats and days. Learn hence, That the love and practice of religious duties, such as righteousness and peace, is a clear and strong argument of a person's acceptance with God. Learn, 2. That such as are for those things accepted by God, ought by no means, for differing from us in lesser things, to be disowned of us, and cast out of communion by us.

19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

This verse is an inference drawn from the foregoing discourse. "Seeing the kingdom of God, or our common Christianity, doth not consist either in the doing or declining of these little indifferent things, let us by no means hazard the peace of the church, or break communion with such as in their sentiments differ from us; much less let us despise and set at naught each other, upon the account of these small, yet unhappy differences. But let us earnestly pursue the things that make for the common peace of all Christians, and the things by which we may further each other's edification and salvation." Learn hence, That in case of any emergent differences among Christians, it ought to be the joint care and endeavour of all and every one to pursue the things which make for peace, and that this peace be such as will consist with, and greatly help forward, the good of the church: *Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

20 For meat destroy not the work

of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

That is, for meat destroy not *thou* the work of God. Do not *thou*, for so inconsiderable a matter as eating is, endanger the Christianity of thy brother, or hazard the peace of the church, and cause any through scandal to fall off from their Christian profession. If any of you say, that all meats are clean, and therefore lawful; in answer, they are certainly so in themselves, but yet it is your sin if you use them to the scandal and offence of others, that are not satisfied in the lawfulness of them." It is most certainly the duty of Christians to deny themselves the use of their Christian liberty in some things, when by making use of it they may endanger any of their brethren, by causing them to fall from their own stedfastness.

21 It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

It is not good; that is, it is not charitable to make use of any part of our Christian liberty, when by so doing any weak Christian is offended, discouraged, and driven from his profession, and brought to any kind of sin. And if it be a Christian's obliged duty to forbear the use of indifferent things, when it is a scandal to the weak; how much more is it a duty to avoid obtruding and imposing such things to the scandal, offence, and hurt of others.

22 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

Here the apostle answers an objection: "Some might be ready to say, that they had faith, that is, a firm and full persuasion that it is lawful for them to eat those meats, which others judged to be sinful; and therefore it is necessary that they profess it, and own it, and assert their liberty." The apostle answers, "Hast thou more knowledge than he, to believe those things to be lawful, which he apprehends to be sinful? Keep thy knowledge and belief to thyself, to justify thy actions before God, but use it not to the hurt and prejudice of others; for he is a happy man, that when he knows a thing to be lawful, doth so use his liberty about it as not to offend others, or condemn himself; for that is a sad kind of knowledge which is used to destroy others, and condemn ourselves. Such

Christians as have different sentiments from their brethren, as to the matters of indifferent things especially, ought to keep their judgment and opinion to themselves, and not to hazard the peace of the church by an imprudent publication: *Hast thou faith? have it to thyself.*

23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

That is, "He that doubteth whether he should eat or no, and yet eats, is condemned of himself, because he doth a thing when he is not satisfied of its lawfulness; for whatsoever is not done of faith, that is, with a persuasion that it is lawful, is to him that does it undoubtedly sinful." Whatever a man does, believing it to be a sin, is certainly a sin in him. Here observe, That an erring conscience binds us to do nothing against it. A scrupulous conscience is a troublesome one, but it is better than a presumptuous conscience. As we must not nourish our scruples and doubts, so neither must we act against our scruples and doubts. In short, no man is to act contrary to his conscience; but then it is as much his duty to inform his conscience, as to follow his conscience. To act against conscience is a very great sin; but a man may act according to his conscience, and yet be a very great sinner. St. Paul, when he was a bloody persecutor, tells us he acted according to his conscience; Acts xxxvi. 9. *I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth.* Pray we then for a conscience rightly informed by the word of God: and that we may so follow the dictates and directions of it whilst we live, that it may neither reprove nor reproach us when we come to die. *Amen.*

CHAP. XV.

Our apostle having spent the foregoing chapter in a general exhortation and direction to stronger Christians, how they should carry themselves towards their weak brethren in the use of their Christian liberty about indifferent things, advising them neither to be censorious in judging one another, nor yet to put a stumbling-block in the way of one another to occasion their falling: in the former part of this chapter he proceeds upon the same argument, and prosecutes the same design, exhorting the stronger Christians to bear with the infirmities of their weaker brethren, and this from the example of Jesus Christ. And accordingly he bespeaks them thus, ver. 1.

WE then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let every one of us please his neighbour,

for his good to edification. 3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

Observe here, 1. A great doctrine asserted, and a special duty declared, namely, that the strong, that is, such as do thoroughly understand their Christian liberty, should bear with the infirmities, the ignorance, frowardness, and scrupulousness of the weak, and also forbear the doing of that which may scandalize and hurt the souls of men who have not the same measures of knowledge with ourselves; *The strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.*

Observe, 2. The universality of the duty: *We*, that is, not only all private Christians, but all church-governors. He puts himself into the number, that he may propose himself as an example of the following duty; *we*, that are the officers, the pastors, and governors of the church, like parents who bear with children in their waywardness, so must we bear, though not with heresies in doctrine, or enormities in practice, yet with such errors and mistakes in both as proceed from ignorance, or common infirmities. Observe, 3. A further duty urged and enforced, namely, not to please ourselves, but others: *Let every one of us not please ourselves, but our neighbour;* that is, not please ourselves by insisting upon the use of our lawful liberty, but rather, for the sake of others, depart a little from our own right. Yet observe, 4. The limitation and restriction of this duty: *for his good to edification.* It is not simply and absolutely said, "Let every one please his neighbour." The heretic, the drunkard, and others, would like that well, to have every one speak and act as they do: but the rule is, to please every man for his good to edification; thus far we may please them, but no farther. Edification is the rule, the scope, and boundary, of all our complacency in and compliance with others.

Observe, 5. How the apostle urges and enforces this duty, from the example of Jesus Christ: *he pleased not himself*, therefore such as profess faith in him must study to be as he was. Nothing was more remote from Christ when here on earth, than self-seeking and self-pleasing; he did not consult his own ease or satisfaction, but rather respected others' benefit than his own; yea, he was so far from pleasing of himself, that he did willingly expose himself to all the reproaches and contumelies of men, in obedience to his Father's will; and was so tender of God the Father's honour, that all the reproaches which fell upon the one affected and af-

licted the other: *The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.* Now from the whole we note, That Christians ought to be very tender towards one another in the use of their lawful liberty; they must not do whatever they please in things of an indifferent nature, without showing any regard to others; much less should they please themselves in a proud reflecting upon their own knowledge, and in contemning those that have not so great a latitude and liberty as themselves. *We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, &c.*

4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

The apostle here informs us what is the general use of the holy scriptures, and what is the particular reason for which they were written; namely, 1. For instruction, *they were written for our learning*; all the precepts, promises, threatenings, rewards and punishments, recorded in the scriptures, are for our information, conviction, and direction. 2. They were written for our comfort and consolation also, *that we through patience and comfort of them might have hope*; that is, that we through patience in bearing the like censures and reproaches, which we find the scripture-saints have borne before us, might have hope of being rewarded as they were for it. Learn hence, That the great end for which the holy scriptures were written, was the informing of our judgments, and the directing of our practice; that by the examples which we find there of the patience of holy men under sufferings, and of God's relieving and comforting them in their distresses, we might have hope, yea, confidence and assurance, that God will also comfort and relieve us, under the like pressures and burdens.

5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; 6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle concludes his foregoing exhortation, with votive supplications, and fervent prayer. The ministers of God must follow the word they deliver with prayer; they must not only wrestle with their people, but they must wrestle with God for and in behalf of their people, if they ever hope

to overcome. Observe, 2. The prayer and supplication itself; and that is, for concord and unity among Christians: *That they may, with one mind and one mouth, glorify God*: that in their Christian assemblies they may all worship God after the same manner, and not one this way, and another that. Unity among Christians in common conversation, but especially in church-communion, is a very desirable mercy, and much to be prayed for by the ministers of God. Observe, 3. How the apostle addresses himself in prayer to God for his mercy under a double title, (1.) As a God of patience, *The God of patience grant you to be like-minded*; intimating what great need there is of patience, in order to maintain love and unity among Christians; and, that God must be applied to in prayer, who is the author of it, to produce and work this grace of patience, in order unto peace and unity among Christians: *The God of patience grant you to be like-minded.* The unity of the saints greatly depends upon the exercise of patience one towards another; and that they may attain it, he begs the God of patience to give it. (2.) Our apostle joins with this another title, namely, *The God of consolation*; wherein he points them to that abundant comfort which would result to themselves from such a blessed unity, continued and maintained by the mutual exercise of patience and forbearance one towards another: *The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another.* Observe, 4. The pattern and example which he lays before them, to excite and quicken them to this duty, namely, the example of Christ himself: *According to Christ Jesus*, that is, according to the example of Christ Jesus; as if the apostle had said, "Let us consider how the Lord Jesus bears with us, how many thousand infirmities and failings doth he find in the best of us, yet is he pleased to maintain communion with us; and shall not we after his example do the like, that thereby God may be eminently glorified by us?" Observe, 5. How God is called the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 6. 1. As he begat him by an eternal and ineffable generation. 2. As he was man, so he created him, *St. Luke, i. 35.* 3. As Mediator, so he appointed him to, and qualified him for, that office. And eternally magnified be omnipotent love, that the comfort of this compellation redounds to us! for, as he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, so he is in him our Father also, our merciful, our gracious, and loving Father. May we ever demean ourselves towards him as dutiful and obedient children!

7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

Here our apostle concludes the argument which he had hitherto insisted upon, in this and the former chapter, namely, That all Christians, both strong and weak, should mutually forbear one another, and that both Jew and Gentile should receive each other into fellowship and communion, without contention about things of an indifferent nature: *Wherefore receive ye one another.* And to enforce his exhortation, he propounds the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Receive one another as Christ also received us;* that is, after the example of Christ, who puts no difference betwixt Jew and Gentile, but receives both, and bears with the infirmities of both; which action in Christ, and the imitation of it in us, will much redound to the glory of God; his declarative and manifestative glory being much promoted by this concord and union with and among all his members, of what denomination soever they are, whether believing Jews or Gentiles. Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ has given full and ample demonstration of his great and wonderful love unto his church and people. 2. That this love of Christ toward all his children and people ought to be improved by them, as an argument to love one another; *Receive one another, as Christ received us.* 3. That Christians receiving, embracing, and loving one another, and bearing with one another's weaknesses and infirmities, according to Christ's example and command, will contribute exceedingly to the honour and glory of Almighty God, and to the abundant consolation and satisfaction of each other: *Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.*

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. 9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. 10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. 11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. 12 And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

VOL. II.—15

The apostle had, in the foregoing verse, propounded the example of Christ in receiving both Jew and Gentile to his grace and favour, as an argument to persuade all Christians to receive one another: now in the verses before us, he declares how and after what manner Christ received both Jews and Gentiles. As for the Jews, first, whom he calls *the circumcision*, the apostle telleth us, that Jesus was their minister; that is, he was circumcised like them, conversed generally with them, and exercised his ministry among them, according to the many promises which God had made to the Jewish patriarchs; and thus he showed his love and mercy towards the Jews in the days of his flesh. Then, secondly, As to the Gentiles; he affirms, that according to the several prophecies and promises in the Old Testament, they were called and received to mercy by our Lord Jesus Christ, the partition-wall being by him broken down, and Jew and Gentile become one sheepfold under one Shepherd. Now from the truth and faithfulness of Christ towards the Jews; and from his love and tenderness, mercy and compassion, towards the Gentiles; and from his divine indulgence towards both; the apostle very fitly draws this inference and conclusion, That all Christians, how differing soever from one another in their judgments and opinions as to lesser things, ought to receive one another into fellowship and Christian communion; and instead of biting and devouring one another, be once at length so wise and happy as to hold the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle closes his exhortation to brotherly concord and unity with a pithy and pathetic prayer; his example herein is instructive. Observe, 2. The title or appellation which he gives unto God in prayer, *The God of hope*; sometimes he styles him the God of grace, sometimes the God of peace, sometimes the God of patience; here the God of hope; he being so objectively, the only object of our common hope, and also effectively, as he is the author and producer of hope in us. Observe, 3. The mercies he prays for: 1. That they may be filled with all joy and peace in believing; that their hearts may overflow with peace from God and one towards another; and with all that joy which results from both. 2. That they may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost;

where by hope understand the good hoped for, namely, heaven and eternal life, a firm expectation of which is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. Learn, 1. That God is the object of a Christian's hope, and if so, the sin of despair is a most unreasonable sin; for why should any despair of his mercy who is the God of hope, who commands us to hope in his mercy, and takes pleasure in them that do so? *Psal. cxlvii.* 11. Learn, 2. That the grace of hope, together with joy and peace in believing, are wrought in the Christian's heart through the power of the Holy Ghost, that is, through the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost enlightening the understanding, inclining the will, rectifying the affections, and reducing all the rebellious powers and faculties of the soul (in concurrence with our endeavours) under the government and dominion of reason and religion.

14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. 15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you, in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God. 16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. 17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

Our apostle being now about to conclude his epistle to the church at Rome, excuses himself that he had written so largely and with such freedom to them, believing that they abounded in grace and knowledge, and were very fit and able to instruct and direct one another; however, he thought fit to write unto them, having had the honour conferred upon him by Christ to be called to the apostolical office, and particularly to be the ambassador of Christ to the Gentiles; most passionately desiring that he might present and offer them up to God, as an acceptable sacrifice, through the power and assistance of the Holy Ghost; and that his success in the conversion of the Gentiles would be matter of abundant glory unto him. Here observe, 1. How the apostle, in preparing the Gen-
tiles for the obedience of the gospel, com-

pares himself to a Levitical priest, conversant about his sacrifice, and fitting it to be offered up to God. 2. That the Gentiles, dedicated by the apostle's ministry to the service of God, were the apostle's sacrifice and oblation. 3. That the Holy Spirit is a *kibamen* poured on this sacrifice; by which it is sanctified and rendered acceptable unto God. 4. That such an oblation, or offering up of a people in this manner unto God, is matter of rejoicing, yea, matter of glorying, to the ministers of Jesus Christ; *I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ.*

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, 19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God: so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ, 20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: 21 But, as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand.

Observe here, 1. The indefatigable industry and pains of the holy apostle, in order to the conversion of the Gentiles: *From Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, he fully preached the gospel of Christ.* This, according to Parcus's computation, was little less than a thousand miles. The industry of the apostles, in planting and propagating the gospel of Christ, was almost incredible. Lord, what pains did they take; what hazards did they run; what difficulties did they contest and contend with, in that great work! Observe, 2. That although their industry was great, yet their success was greater than their industry, and beyond all human expectation. This appears by the vast spreading of the gospel in so short a space; *From Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum.* Within thirty years after our Saviour's death, the gospel was not only diffused through the greatest part of the Roman empire, but had reached as far as Parthia and India. Observe, 3. That the gospel or doctrine of Jesus had likewise a wonderful power and efficacy upon the lives and manners of men: the apostle tells us, that the Gentiles who were converted to Christianity, *were obedient by word and deed*: upon the change of their religion,

followed the change of their conversation, and whole course of life. Observe, 4. The reason of all this wonderful success, which St. Paul and other apostles had in preaching the gospel; and that was the extraordinary power of the Holy Ghost, in enabling them to work miracles for the confirmation of the gospel, ver. 19. *Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.* Such was the miraculous power of healing diseases, of casting out devils, of inflicting corporal punishment upon scandalous persons; all which did serve in general for the confirmation of the gospel, and did in particular support the honour and authority of the apostles, and supply the want of the magistrates' power, which the Christians could not expect whilst the Roman emperors continued heathen: not that all the miraculous powers were given to every one of the apostles, or that they which had them could exercise them at all times, or whenever they pleased; but only as was most expedient for the use and benefit of the church. Observe, 5. That the apostle, in preaching the gospel, chose to go to such dark and blind places as never heard of the gospel before, rather than amongst them where Christ had been named, that so he might lay the foundation of Christianity himself, and not build upon another man's foundation: And likewise, that in his ministry the prophecy of Esaias might be fulfilled, chap. lii. 15. *To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard, shall understand.*

22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. 23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; 24 Whosoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you. For I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

Our apostle having, in the former verses, excused himself for dealing so plainly in his writings with them, doth here apologize for his not coming amongst them, affirming, that the true reason why he did not visit Rome was this: he looked upon planting of churches as more necessary than watering of them, and the preaching of Christ where he had never been named, to be the most needful work. Now at Rome there had before been a church planted, and elders ordained to build upon that foundation; for this reason he had

hitherto declined coming to Rome. But now, *having no more place in these parts*, that is, having no more churches to plant thereabouts, he signifies both his inclinations and fixed resolutions to visit them at Rome, as he took his journey into Spain, and to stay some time with them, that they might be mutually filled and satisfied with, and refreshed by, each other's company. Here note, 1. That the Romans were very early converted and called to the Christian faith, soon after Christ's ascension; for the twentieth year after it did Paul write this epistle. But he had a desire of seeing the Romans many years before he wrote unto them, and therefore many years before, they were converted to the faith. Note, 2. That our journeying from one place to another is not according to our purpose but God's disposal. The apostle, no doubt, intended to go into Spain when he wrote this; but God overruled the matter beyond the apostle's expectation. The travels of the apostles from place to place, in order to the planting and propagating of the Christian faith, were under the special influences and direction of the Holy Ghost. Acts xvi. 7. *They assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.* Note, 3. The great end why the apostle was so desirous of the sight and enjoyment of the Christians at Rome; it was, that he might be refreshed, nay, *filled with their company.* Lord, how desirable is the communion of saints, and how beneficial the society of sincere and serious Christians! Their company is filling, (not empty, vain, and frothy, as the company of most is, but) administering both grace and comfort to them that enjoy it: *I desire to see you in my journey, that I may be filled with your company.*

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem, to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia, to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. 28 When, therefore, I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. 29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Here the apostle acquaints them with his

present intended journey to Jerusalem, as also with the occasion of it; namely, to carry the charitable contributions of the Greek churches in Macedonia and Achaia, into Judea, and up to the poor saints at Jerusalem, whose necessities required it, and unto whom they were in a sort indebted for it; the Gentiles *having been made partakers of their spiritual things*, (receiving the gospel from Judea) they are obliged in gratitude to minister to them in carnal things. He farther assures them, that as soon as he had finished his journey, and performed this charitable office, he would come to them, and that in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace. Note here, 1. The title given to the poor Christians at Jerusalem; they are called *saints*: *I go to Jerusalem to administer to the saints' necessities*. Saints they were by baptismal dedication, by visible profession, and many, yea most of them, it is to be hoped, by inward sanctification also. Note, 2. That poverty and sanctity are not inconsistent: the saints at Jerusalem are poor, but God provided a purveyor for them; he stirs up the apostle, and the hearts of the Macedonians, to administer to the necessities of these poor saints. Note, 3. How the saints in one church did succour and relieve the poor Christians in another: those in Macedonia and Achaia send relief into Judea, and to the poor saints which were at Jerusalem. Teaching us, that it is our obliged duty to extend our charity to the churches abroad and beyond the seas, when their wants and necessities require it, and our capacities enable us unto it. Note, 4. The nature of this charity declared: it was a free and cheerful contribution, performed with much pleasure. *It pleased them* to make a contribution; it was not extorted or squeezed from, but given with cheerfulness by them; contributions must not be compulsions, but voluntary oblations. Note 5. How this charity is called fruit: *When I have sealed this fruit*; because it was the fruit of their faith, liberality, and love; because as fruit it would redound both to the benefit of the giver and receiver. Charity and alms are fruit redounding to account in the great day of account. Note, 6. The great integrity and fidelity of the apostle in securing of this charity: *When I have sealed, or secured, unto them this fruit*. The church's charity is a sealed treasure, not to be diminished and embezzled, but applied to the uses to which it is devoted. Note, lastly, The assurance which he gives them, that when he comes among them, he shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace unto them; that is, with a full impartment of spiritual gifts

and gospel-blessings, much knowledge, grace, and comfort.

30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me; 31 That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which *I have* for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; 32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

Here, in the close of the epistle, our apostle most affectionately recommends himself to the prayers of the Christian Romans unto whom he wrote: *I beseech you, brethren, strive, &c.* Where observe, 1. The apostle's courteous compellation, *brethren*. There is a threefold brotherhood which the scripture takes notice of: (1.) Betwixt Christ and believers, Heb. ii. 11. *He is not ashamed to call them brethren*. (2.) Betwixt believers themselves, they are brethren by grace, 2 Pet. ii. 17. *Love the brotherhood*; that is, the collective body of believers. (3.) Betwixt the ministers of Christ and their beloved people there is also a brotherhood, Rev. i. 9. *I John your brother*; teaching the ministers of the gospel to carry it towards their people with love and gentleness, and the people to make reciprocal returns of love and affection. Observe, 2. The manner of the apostle's request: it is by way of supplication and entreaty; *I beseech you, brethren*. Though as an apostle he might have enjoined them, yet for love-sake he rather entreats them. Observe, 3. The request itself, that they strive together in their prayers for him: the original word signifies to strive together as wrestlers do, who exert all their power and might in that bodily exercise. Observe, 4. Our apostle's sincerity, and holy ingenuity in this request which he made unto them: he desires them to *strive with him* in their prayers to God for him. He doth not, with some, beg the prayers of others, and neglect to pray for himself, but is willing to draw with them in the same yoke. Observe, 5. A double argument which the apostle makes use of, to enforce his supplication and request: (1.) For the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, for the sake of him who is so dear both to you and me. (2.) For the love of the Spirit: that is, if the grace of love be wrought in you by the Holy Spirit of God, show it by your fervent prayer for

all saints in general, and for myself a minister of Jesus Christ in particular. Observe, 6. The particulars concerning which he desires their supplications; 1. For preservation in his journey to Judea; that the unbelieving Jews, which were prejudiced against him, might have no power to hurt him. 2. That his person and his performance for the *poor saints at Jerusalem*, might find acceptance with the Christian Jews, to whom he was not over acceptable; he therefore begs their prayers, that the believing Jews at Jerusalem might be reconciled both to the believing Gentiles that sent this alms, and also to himself that brought it: *That my service for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints.* 3. That he might have a prosperous journey to them by the will of God. Where note, How much it is our duty always, and in all things, to refer ourselves, our intentions and actions, to the pleasure and providence, to the wisdom and will, of God. And observe, lastly, the special reason why he was so desirous to visit and come unto them, that he might be refreshed with them, and by them; that the company and conversation of each other may be to their mutual refreshment and satisfaction: *That I may come unto you with joy, by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.*

33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

The apostle had desired their prayers for him: here he concludes with a fervent prayer for them. In which observe, The title or attribute given unto God, *The God of peace*; the lover, the author, and giver of peace. The apostle having exhorted the believing Romans to be at peace among themselves, and not to contend about indifferent things, implores the dispenser of this grace to be with them, to dwell among them, and to pour out the great and invaluable blessings of peace and unity, of love and concord upon them: *The God of peace be with you all. Amen.* As we honour the God of peace, whom we serve; as we love the Prince of peace, in whom we believe; as we hope for the comfort of the Spirit of peace; and as we tender the success of the gospel of peace; let us preserve it where it is, and pursue it where it flies from us.

CHAP. XVI.

This chapter, which closes our apostle's Epistle to the Romans, is chiefly made up of charitable and friendly salutations and commendations of some particular persons, according to the earliness and strength of their several graces, and their labour of love for the interest of Christ and his church.

I COMMEND unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: 2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

The first person here mentioned is Phoebe; who going upon some occasion to Rome, St. Paul is supposed to have sent this epistle to the Romans by her: "I commend, says he, to your care and affectionate regard, Phoebe our sister in the faith, who serveth the church at Cenchrea," in the quality of deaconess, as some think; or, as others, who spent her time in receiving and harbouring poor Christians that were driven out of their own country, and who had been a succourer and supporter of the apostle himself. He exhorts them to receive her in the Lord; that is, with Christian love for the Lord's sake, and to be assistant and helpful to her in her outward affairs and business. Learn hence, What honour God puts upon the female sex, in making use of some of them to be assistants to the apostles, and taking care that their offices of love and service for and towards the ministers and members of Christ should not be forgotten, but had and kept in everlasting remembrance. The services which Phoebe did, are here recorded, to posterity transmitted, and to our imitation recommended.

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus: 4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

The first persons at Rome whom St. Paul saluteth by name, are Priscilla and Aquila. The woman is named before her husband, and shows that they were all one in Christ Jesus, in whom is neither male nor female. Here, by the way, it appears how weakly the Papists argue for St. Peter's primacy, because placed *first* in the catalogue of the apostles. By the same argument the woman is the head of the man, because here named before the man. Observe, 2. The honourable title which St. Paul puts upon these two persons, Aquila and Priscilla; he calls them his helpers in Christ Jesus. They were his assistants in propagating the gospel by private instruction, though not by public preaching,

Acts xviii. 28. Observe, 3. The Christian courage which was found with this holy woman Priscilla, and her husband Aquila: *They laid down their own necks* for the apostle; that is, exposed themselves to the hazard of their own lives for his preservation. Observe, 4. The thankful remembrance which the apostle and all the churches of the Gentiles had of this their great and noble service, in hazarding their own lives for his; *To whom I give thanks, and all the churches of the Gentiles.* Because St. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and his preservation redounded to the benefit of them all; therefore were the churches of the Gentiles so sensible of, and thankful for, the apostle's preservation. Observe, lastly, The salutation sent *to the church that was in their house.* By which some understand their household, their Christian family, which he calls a church, because of the pious order and religious worship which was there observed. O happy houses! and thrice happy householders! whose families are little churches for piety and devotion. Others understand by the church in their house, the number of Christians which used there to assemble for religious worship. Be it the one or the other, our apostle forgets not to send kind and Christian salutations to them.

—Salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ. 6 Greet Mary: who bestowed much labour on us. 7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles; who also were in Christ before me.

Three persons are here saluted by name; the first, Epenetus, whom he calls the first-fruits of Achaia; that is, the first person that embraced Christianity, or the faith of Christ, in the region of Achaia: the second is Mary, a common name, but the person here intended was of special note, having bestowed much pains upon, and done many good offices for, the preachers of the gospel: the third is Andronicus, noted for his sufferings and services among the apostles, as also for his early embracing the Christian faith. He was in Christ before me; that is, converted to Christianity before myself. Learn hence, 1. That seniority in grace is a very great honour; and to be in Christ before others, is a transcendent prerogative. Learn, 2. That God will have the good works of all his saints, and the services especially which are done to his ministers and ambassadors by any of his people, to be applauded, valued, and

recorded. Mary's labour bestowed on the apostle, is here mentioned with respect.

8 Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. 10 Salute Apelles, approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. 11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. 12 Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord. 13 Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and his mother and mine. 14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. 15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

Here observe, 1. How the apostle salutes the Christians at Rome, not in general, but particularly and by name, that they might be convinced how particularly mindful he was of them. And as he mentions them by name in his salutations, it is not improbable but that he might mention them also by name in his supplications and private addresses to God. No doubt he bore them, and all converted by him, upon his heart, whenever he went in and out before the Lord. A spiritual father can never be forgetful of his spiritual children. Observe, 2. The persons saluted by the apostle are not men of fame in Rome, noted for their dignity and greatness, or for their wealth and riches, but for their piety and goodness, for labouring in the Lord, and for labouring much in the Lord; for being in Christ, approved in Christ, and helpers in Christ; that is, assistants in propagating the gospel of Christ, and serviceable to those whose work and office it was so to do. 'Tis religion that renders persons renowned, and no persons deserve so well to be remembered by us, as those who are most persevering and laborious in their services for God. Observe, 3. Here are several women as well as men remembered and saluted, and their services for Christ and his ministers recorded. God will have none of his faithful servants forgotten, or any of their good deeds buried in oblivion. Observe, 4. That in all this roll of salutations there is no mention made of St. Peter's name. Had he now been at Rome, as the Papists will

have him, and bishop of that see, it had been morally impossible for our apostle to have forgotten him in his salutations, when so many of his inferiors were remembered by him.

16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

Observe here, How the apostle proceeds from greeting the saints at Rome himself, to persuade them to salute one another. There had been much dissension amongst them about meats and days; he therefore craves of them for the future to embrace each other with cordial love, and affectionate kindness, and, as a token and symbol of it, to salute one another with an holy kiss, the usual expression of friendship in those times. The primitive Christians, at the end of their prayers, before the celebration of the sacrament, did salute one another with a kiss, and then the bread and cup were brought forth; and some observe, that it was done by the men apart, and the women apart. But this custom being afterwards abused, was generally laid aside. That which is lawful in its use, and innocent in its own nature, may and ought to be laid aside when it becomes matter of scandal and just offence.

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions, and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. **18** For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Observe here, **1.** How our apostle takes his leave and farewell of the Romans, with an admonition to them to take heed of persons that were erroneous in doctrine, and scandalous in practice. 'Tis probable he means either those Jews who pleaded the necessity of circumcision, and the observation of the Mosaic rites, as necessary to the salvation of the Gentiles; or the Gnostics to whom the following characters do well agree. Whoever they were, they were dangerous seducers, and to be avoided. Observe, **2.** The character which our apostle gives of these persons; *They serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly.* Note, That seducers are always self-seekers; they are designing men: they aim at themselves, under a pretence of acting for Christ and his glory. *They serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly.*

Observe, **3.** The arts and methods which they use to delude and deceive: *By good words and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple.* Seducers have smooth and glossing tongues; and innocent, harmless men are misled by their fine pretences and fair speeches: and thus they impose upon the simple. Observe, **4.** The double advice which the apostle gives, in order to their being preserved and secured from the poison and contagion of these seducers: namely, to mark them, and avoid them. **(1.)** To mark them: the word signifies such a marking as a watchman useth when he standeth upon a tower to descry an enemy; which is performed with great accuracy. **(2.)** To avoid them as a sound person would shun him that has the plague upon him. Where note, The apostle advises to mark them, in order to the declining of them, not destroying of them; to cut them off by excommunication, not to cut their throats, or burn their bodies for heresy: *Mark them which cause divisions, and avoid them.* Observe, **5.** The persons whom this exhortation concerns, who they are that should judge of the doctrines and seducers: they are the common people, the Romans, the saints or Christians at Rome, to whom he was now writing; to them the apostle allows a judgment of discretion, a power to try and examine the doctrines delivered by persons pretending to infallible inspiration: *I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions, contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned.* Christians are by no means to be led by their teachers blindfold, but ought to see with their own eyes, to take nothing upon trust, but all upon trial; to examine the doctrines they are taught, and to observe and mark the teachers of them: *I beseech you, says our apostle, mark them.*

19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

As if the apostle had said, "I do not accuse you, but advise and warn you only; I acknowledge that you the Christians at Rome are famous for your obedience to the apostolical doctrine, and that you walk in faith and love, in unity and concord, to the credit of the gospel, and the honour of your holy religion. But I would have you know, that you are not wholly out of danger of being infected by those judaizers; I wish you therefore wisdom to escape their snares. The Lord make you wise as well as zealous, that you may discern that

which is good, and decline that which is evil." Learn hence, That the holiest, best, and wisest of Christians, must not look upon themselves as secure from the snares of seducers, but stand in need of all the cautions and warnings, of all the advice and counsel, of their spiritual guides, in order to their preservation from the poison of their principles, and the contagion of their example.

20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

These words may be considered either relatively, or absolutely; if relatively, or with relation to the context, then by Satan is to be understood seducers and false teachers, whom he had warned the Romans of in the preceding verses: *Mark them which cause divisions, &c.* Learn hence, 1. That all corrupters of divine truths, and troublers of the church's peace, are Satan's instruments: *God shall bruise Satan*, that is, Satan in his instruments, *under your feet*. Learn, 2. That divine evangelical truth shall be finally victorious: no weapon formed against it shall prosper; the head of error shall fall low at last at the feet of truth. Seducers may bluster for a time, but shall be bruised at last; the God of peace shall bruise Satan shortly. Consider the words absolutely, and we have a victory proclaimed; the author of that victory declared, the God of peace; the enemy conquered, Satan; the conquest, or manner of conquering, by bruising; the time of the conquest, not presently, but shortly: *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*. Learn, 1. That the reconciler of the world shall be the subduer of Satan: in subduing Satan, he conquers all his instruments. He saith not, God shall bruise seducers and heretics under your feet, but Satan, and in him all that belong unto him; as the fall of the general puts the whole army to the rout. Learn, 2. That Almighty God, in his own time, will make believers complete conquerors over Satan, and all their spiritual enemies. Note, That it is by virtue of Christ's conquest over Satan, that believers become conquerors; for the promise here refers to the original promise, *Gen. iii. 15*, That Christ, the seed of the woman, shall bruise the serpent's head. So then it is by virtue of the act of Jesus Christ, bruising the serpent's head, yea, breaking it, that Satan is bruised under our feet. As Christ bruised him under his own feet, so in his own time will he bruise him under our feet. The personal, as well as the representative

seed of the woman, shall bruise the serpent's head. Remember, poor tempted Christian, for thy comfort, the God of peace will tread Satan under our feet shortly; thou shalt set thy foot on the neck of thy enemy; and when once thy foot is over the threshold of glory, thou shalt cast back a smiling look, and say, "Now Satan, do thy worst; through grace I am where thou shalt never come."

21 Timotheus my work-fellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. 22 I Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, salute you in the Lord. 23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus, the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

Our apostle had, in the former part of the chapter, saluted divers persons himself; here he sends the salutations of those that were with him to the saints or Christians at Rome: hereby showing that mutual love and amity, that happy concord and unity, which is and ought to be between all the sincere disciples and followers of Jesus; when, though not in body, yet in mind, they should be present with one another, and, though distant in place, yet undivided in affection. The two principal persons here sending joint salutations with the apostle to these Romans, were Timothy and Gaius. The former St. Paul calls his work-fellow, or fellow-labourer; *Timotheus my work-fellow*. Where note the great humility of the apostle, in dignifying so young a man as Timothy then was with this title: what greater dignity than to be a fellow-worker with the apostle, in planting and propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ? The latter was Gaius, whom the apostle calls *his host*, and *the host of the whole church*: that is, a person employed by the church of Corinth to entertain Christian strangers. To perform the meanest offices of love and service for the persecuted or distressed saints and servants of Jesus Christ, to entertain them in our houses, yea, to wash their feet, is an honourable and acceptable service.

24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Here again our apostle, from the abundance of his affectionate heart towards them, repeats his benediction to them, that the mercy, grace, and goodness, of the Lord Jesus Christ, may abide upon, and evermore continue with, them. Where note, The fountain and original spring from whence all grace doth rise and flow;

namely, from Jesus Christ: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.* It is so called, because he purchased it for us, because he applies it to us.

25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, (according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, 26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith;) 27 To God only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen.

Our apostle here concludes his excellent epistle with a solemn doxology or thanksgiving to God; in which he first describes God, and then ascribes eternal glory to him. He describes him both by his power and by his wisdom. By his power first, *To him that is able to establish you according to my gospel*; that is, to establish you, in grace and truth, in faith and holiness, and to keep you from falling into sin and error. Such is our weakness and Satan's power, that unless God confirm and establish us, we shall soon run into sin and danger. Observe, farther, The instrumental means which God makes use of for his people's establishment; and that is, the gospel, and

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the preaching of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the gospel which Christ and his apostles taught and delivered. This is called a mystery, kept secret since the world began, and now made manifest for the obedience of the faith; that is, that it may be believed and obeyed. The second attribute in the description of God, is his wisdom: he is called the wise, the only wise God; not to exclude the Son and Holy Ghost, but the wisdom of the creature only. He is only wise originally, his wisdom is of himself: yea, his wisdom is himself: the wisdom of God is not a quality separable from himself, but is his very essence and nature. He is only wise, because he is incomparably wise; there is none for wisdom can compare with him. He has wisdom in such a degree and eminency, that the very angels are chargeable with folly before him. In a word, he is only wise, because all wisdom is derived from him, all the wisdom of angels and men is but a ray from his light, a drop from his ocean. And if so, then let the wisdom of God, in all his dealings with us and ours, be admired and adored by us; for all his works of providence are as orderly and perfect as his works of creation, though we perceive it not.

Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and ever. Amen.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS.

That this Epistle was written by St. Paul to the Church at Corinth, was never doubted by the church of God. Corinth was the eye of Greece, a very opulent and wealthy city, but infamous for pride and luxury, for wantonness and uncleanness: yet 'God had much people in this city,' in order to whose conversion to Christianity, this apostle continued preaching amongst them a year and six months: and such a special blessing did accompany his endeavours, that this new-planted church became one of the most famous and eminent churches for all manner of spiritual gifts throughout the Christian world.

The occasion of writing this Epistle, was an unhappy schism that arose in the church of Corinth, by the people's preferring one preacher before another. Instead of being thankful to God for the endowments of all his ministers, and endeavoring to reap the benefits and advantage of all their mutual labours, they vainly gloried in men; some crying up Paul, others Apollos, &c. Hereupon St. Paul sent this Epistle, as a bucket to quench this fire, which had threatened the destruction of this flourishing Church.

And observable it is, with what freedom and impartiality the apostle proceeds in the management of this Epistle. He sharply reproves both their erroneous opinions, and vicious practices; he wisely rebukes them for their schisms and divisions, for their confusion and disorders in public assemblies, for their horrid profanation of the Lord's supper, for their toleration of incest, for going to law before heathen magistrates; he asserts the minister's maintenance, the excellence of spiritual gifts, the nature and necessity of charity; and by multiplied arguments confirms the doctrine of the resurrection.

CHAP. I.

PAUL, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother. 2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: 3 Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's asserting his commission for the work of the ministry to be from God: he was *called to be an apostle by the will of God*; he did not thrust himself into that high and honourable employment, but was chosen, called and sent by God. Such as exercise the sacred function without a regular call and commission, may expect a blast instead of a blessing. Observe, 2. The double object of St. Paul's salutation in this epistle: he

first salutes the church of Corinth in particular, and then all the churches of Christ in general: *To all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.* Where note, That they were not real saints, no, nor all visible saints, (but called to be both,) whom he calls the church. Many secretly vile and scandalously profane persons were found amongst them; yet the apostle salutes them as the church of God; *To the church of God at Corinth.* Learn hence, That there may be a mixture of profane and scandalous persons with real saints in the church of God here on earth; there may be, I say. I mean, *de facto*, there have been, and there will be; not *de jure*, that there ought to be such a mixture; yet if so, this doth not unchurch the assembly in which they are; they are the disease of the church, but not its death; such corruptions and blemishes cannot consist with the well-being, but may consist with the being, of particular churches. Observe, 3. The salutation itself, *Grace and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Where note, 1.

A double blessing desired, *Grace and peace*; grace is of all blessings the richest, and peace is of all comforts the sweetest. Note, 2. A double spring discovered from whence this double blessing flows, God and Christ: God, as the original source and fountain of all good in himself; and Christ, as the donor and dispenser of all good to us: Note, 3. The order of the words, first grace, then peace: there can be no peace without grace, and no grace but there will be peace; there can be no peace but from God, no peace from God but as a Father; no peace from God as a Father, but as our Father; and he cannot comfortably be said to be our Father, but through our Lord Jesus Christ. Learn hence, That all that grace and peace which believers share in, and are made partakers of, is derived from God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; 5 That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; 6 Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: 7 So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye may be blameless* in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

As if the apostle had said, "I am very thankful to God for his grace and favour bestowed upon you through Jesus Christ, in and by the preaching of the gospel, and particularly for the gift of tongues, and other miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to you, whereby the divinity of the gospel (called here *the testimony of Christ*, because it testifies of Christ) was attested and confirmed. He farther tells them, he was firmly persuaded that God would confirm them unto the end, causing them to persevere unblameable in holiness, till the coming of Christ to deliver his faithful servants, and remarkably to destroy his crucifiers; because of the faithfulness of God, who having called them to the fellowship of his Son, and to partake of his invaluable benefits, will never leave them, but accomplish the whole pleasure of his will in them." Observe here, 1. That the apostle in the third verse prayed affectionately for the grace of God to be bestowed upon the Corinthians; in his

fourth verse he thanks God abundantly for the grace they had already received: and no man has such supplies of grace, but he stands in need of farther influences; and there is no such way to attain more grace, as to be thankful for what we have already received. Observe, 2. To whom the apostle returns his thanks for all that grace the Corinthians had received; even to the God of all grace: *I thank my God for the grace which is given you*. All grace depends upon God, as to its being and production, as to its exercise and operation, as to its growth and augmentation, as to its evidence and manifestation, as to its perseverance and preservation; he is both the author and finisher of our faith. Both seed, increment, and perfection, the beginnings, increasings, and finishings of grace, are all from God the Father, but by and through our Lord Jesus Christ, who by his blood purchased grace for us, and by his Spirit produceth it in us. Observe, 3. That believers, in the first ages of the Christian church, received not only sanctifying graces, but the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, particularly the gift of tongues and miracles. Observe, 4. That they obtained these gifts by Jesus Christ, and through faith in him. Observe, 5. That by these gifts *the testimony of Christ was confirmed*, that is, the doctrine of the gospel, testifying that Jesus was the true Messiah, by his being raised from the dead. Observe, 6. That by these gifts, and by this earnest of the Spirit, they had encouragement to expect and wait for the approach and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 7. *Ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

These words are a pathetic exhortation to a most important duty. In which observe, 1. The duty itself directed and exhorted to; and that is, unity and unanimity amongst Christians: this is three-fold, the unity of the head, of the heart, and of the tongue: the unity of the head, and that is an unity in judgment and opinion; the unity of the heart, is an unity in love and affection; and the unity of the tongue, is an unity in language and expression, when we speak all the same things, and with one mouth, as well as with one mind, glorify God. Observe, 2.

The powerful arguments here enforcing this duty: the first is an apostolical observation, *I beseech you*; he that had authority to command, has the meekness to entreat, and in a supplicatory way to beseech. The second is, the nearness of the relation, *I beseech you brethren*; an endearing expression, and full of affection: they were brethren by place and nation, and brethren by faith and profession, owning the same God, professing the same religion, animated by the same Spirit, encouraged by the same promises, partakers of the same hope, and heirs of the same glory. The third argument is, the name he beseeches in, and that is Christ's: *I beseech you by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*; that is, "I adjure you for his sake, and his authority, by all that he had done, suffered, and purchased for you. If you have any reverence for his authority as a sovereign, if you have any regard for his undertaking as a saviour, look that there be no divisions amongst you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." Observe, 3. That so exceedingly was the apostle's heart set upon this duty, that in both his epistles to the Corinthians he presses them very earnestly to the love and practice of it; here, in his first epistle and first chapter; and in his second epistle and last chapter: *Be of one mind, live in peace, &c.* From whence note, That the apostle makes this exhortation to unity among Christians the *alpha* of his first epistle, and the *omega* of his last; 'tis the first duty which he commends to their consideration in the former epistle, and the last which he recommends to their care and practice in the latter epistle; intimating thereby unto us, that this unity in judgment and affection is the first and last thing to be respected among Christians, as being both the beginning and perfection of Christianity.

11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them, *which are of the house of Chloe*, that there are contentions among you. 12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. 13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

Observe here, 1. The apostle declares a reason why in the foregoing verse he pressed his exhortation to love and unity with so much fervour and vehemency! namely, because he had received information that there were contentions and sid-

ings, divisions and parties, amongst them, to the great scandal of Christianity, which was so newly planted amongst them. Whence learn, That divisions and factions do quickly creep into the best and purest churches. This church at Corinth was a garden newly planted by St. Paul; yet, notwithstanding all his care and personal inspection, these ill weeds of division and dissension grew apace; it was not while men slept that these tares were sown, but while the officers of the church were both awake and watchful. Observe, 2. What was the cause of these divisions and dissensions that were found among them: it was having mens persons in admiration, factiously crying up one minister above another, naming themselves the followers of this and that man, setting up teachers one against another, and even Christ against his ministers. Learn hence, That although it is the people's duty to have a great and high esteem of the ministers of Christ, yet must not their respect degenerate into a sinful admiration of their persons; for the factious affection of one minister above another, is both sinful and dangerous; it occasions enmity and dissension among ministers themselves, and their people also, when the gifts and abilities of one are cried up in contempt of others. Observe, 3. That these Corinthians did not only sinfully admire the persons of their teachers, but also set up their teachers as heads of several parties, sinfully resting upon them, and glorying in them. Learn hence, That it is not barely unlawful, but very dangerous and exceeding sinful, for persons to call themselves by the name of any men, though never so eminent, so as to build or pin their faith upon them: we are not believers in Paul or Peter, but in Christ; there is but one head of the church, and that is Christ, and he is not divided: his disciples we are in whose name we are baptized, and that is not in the name of any man, but in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to build therefore our faith upon any man, is to make him our Saviour, and to put him in Christ's room and place.

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius; 15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. 16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. 17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of

words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Observe here, 1. That though baptizing were God's ordinance, and St. Paul, as Christ's minister, had a commission and sufficient authority to baptize, yet the providence of God so ordered, that he baptized very few, lest any should say he baptized in his own name. Observe, 2. That among those few he baptized, here is a whole household mentioned, *The household of Stephanas*. Where learn, That as Abraham, and others under the old testament, were to bring their households into covenant with God by circumcision, so did those that had households under the new testament endeavour to bring their whole families into God's covenant by baptism. The gaoler and his house, Lydia and her house, Stephanas and his household, are all baptized. Observe, 3. The comparison here made betwixt baptizing and preaching, and the preference given to the one before the other: *Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach*; that is, rather to preach than to baptize: this was his great business, his principal work; though baptizing was within his commission, yet it was not that, but preaching the gospel to convert souls to Christ, that he was called after such a wonderful manner, and endued with such extraordinary gifts for the performance of. It is neither wise, nor safe, to cry up one ordinance of God above another, but to have them all in estimation, and none more than the preaching of the gospel, which is one principal part of our commission. Observe, 4. The manner after which Christ sent St. Paul to preach the gospel: *Not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect*; that is, not attracting and drawing men to the faith by the power of human eloquence, lest the doctrine of Christ should be rendered suspected by such a pompous way of preaching. Plain truths, without art and varnish, may be conveyed with more warmth and vigour to the conscience, than all the charms of human eloquence from the most fluent and popular tongue. The way and manner of St. Paul's preaching was grave and serious, pious and ardent, plain and profitable. With what brevity, without darkness; with what gravity, without affectation; with what eloquence, without meretricious ornament, were St. Paul's discourses! solidly instructing men in the great and necessary duties of the gospel, and furnishing them with arguments and motives to a good life, and this in such a plain and familiar manner, that the success and prevalency of his preaching appeared to be of God, and not of man.

18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

Observe here, 1. The character and description given of the preaching of the gospel: it is called *the preaching of the cross*, that is, of a crucified Saviour; it represents him who died upon the cross as the proper object of our faith and hope, of our affiance and trust. Observe, 2. The low and mean esteem which the philosophers and wise men among the heathens had of the doctrine of the cross, and of the preaching of the gospel; they esteemed it *foolishness*: *The preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness*. So esteemed, 1. In regard of the subject of it; it is the doctrine of the cross, that is, of a crucified and despised Saviour; it acquaints us, that the eternal God, in the fulness of time, became a mortal man; that life became subject to death, and blessing subject to a curse; all which are such appearing contradictions, that natural reason is very prone to scorn and deride them. 2. The wisdom of the world, or the wise men among the Gentiles, did esteem the preaching of the gospel foolishness, in regard of the manner of it; because the gospel doth nakedly and barely propound some doctrines of faith, and positively requires our assent to them from the evidence of the things themselves, and from the authority of the principal speaker, God himself. The mysteries of the Christian religion, though not contrary to reason, yet are above our comprehension; notwithstanding which, they do not only require our assent, but also challenge the obedience and adoration of our faith. Now the wisdom of the world is not satisfied with God's *αυτος εστιν*, with God's authority in asserting; but requires that every doctrine of faith, and every mystery of the gospel, be made so plain and obvious, so clear and perspicuous, that their shallow reason may be able fully to comprehend it; for these reasons is *the preaching of the cross, to them that perish, foolishness*. Observe, 3. What efficacy and virtue the gospel is of unto believers: *Unto us which are saved, says the apostle, it is the power of God*; that is, a powerful instrument in God's hand for men's conversion and sal-

vation; the word preached is the organ or instrument through which the vital power of the Spirit is conveyed unto the souls of sinners, how much soever it is contemned and despised in the world. Observe, 4. How the apostle upbraids the pride and folly of the learned philosophers and reputed wise men among the heathens, who, though they excelled in natural wisdom, yet despised evangelical truths, making reason their supreme rule, and philosophy their highest principle: "*Where,*" says the apostle, *is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?* That is, where is the wisdom now of the wisest philosopher among the Gentiles? where is the wisdom of the scribe, or the interpreter of the law among the Jews? *where is the disputer of this world,* or the curious searcher into the depths and secrets of nature? Let them show so many brought, by all their wisdom, learning, and eloquence, to the knowledge of God, and to the practice of their duty, as the preaching of a crucified Christ hath done; yea, all their natural wisdom is mere folly, in comparison of the glorious effects which the preaching of the gospel has produced.

21 For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

Observe here, 1. That the frame of this world, or the work of creation, is here called *the wisdom of God*; the name of the cause is given to the effect, because divine wisdom shines so clearly forth in the work of creation; the beautiful frame of heaven and earth doth discover the several excellences and perfections which are in God, and amongst the rest his admirable and unerring wisdom. Observe, 2. What is here affirmed concerning the most wise and learned men among the heathens, namely, that with all their *wisdom they knew not God*: that is, they did not own and acknowledge him, serve and glorify him, as they should and ought to have done. *The world by wisdom knew not God*, that is, they knew him confusedly, but not distinctly: they knew in general, that a God there was, but knew not particularly who the true God was; they knew him notionally, but not practically; their knowledge had no influence upon their hearts or lives; they knew him as essentially considered in himself, but knew him not relatively, as considered in Christ; they knew not Immanuel, God with us, and becoming a Mediator for us, him they did not know.

Learn hence, That the greatest wits of the world, having no more but the common light of nature, and the advantage of human accomplishments, are oft-times exceedingly ignorant as to the spiritual and saving knowledge of God and Christ; human wisdom and divine knowledge, as they are distinct in their nature, so they are separable in their subject: let those that have both, bless God with eternal thanksgivings. Observe, 3. God's gracious supply of that defect which the world laboured under: when by all their wisdom, collected from the book of the creature, they could not arrive at the right knowledge of the true God, then it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Where note, 1. The persons described whom the wisdom of God thinks fit to save: *them that believe*; them exclusively, and none but them. Note, 2. The great instrumental means which the wisdom of God ordained in order to the believer's salvation, namely, the preaching of the gospel; it pleased God by preaching to save them that believe. Note, 3. The mean and low opinion, the vile and base esteem, which the world have of this venerable ordinance of God, the preaching of the gospel; they think fit to style it foolishness, *the foolishness of preaching*. Note, 4. The moving, impelling, and impulsive cause of this gracious dispensation, to wit, the preaching of the gospel in order to men's salvation; and that is, the goodwill and pleasure of a gracious God: *It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*.

22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: 24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Observe here, 1. How both Jews and Gentiles conspired together in their contempt and rejection of the gospel; *the Jews require a sign*; that is, besides all the miracles and the resurrection of Christ, the Jews require some sign from heaven to prove that Christ was sent from God: so unreasonable and obstinate was their infidelity, that all the miracles of our Saviour's life, death, and resurrection, could not remove it. *And the Greeks seek after wisdom,*

that is, they look for profound wisdom, eminent learning and deep philosophy, in the gospel; and scorn it, because they find not there what they expected: *The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.* Observe, 2. The apostle's peremptory resolution to preach Christ crucified, though he were to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. But how was Christ a stumbling-block to the Jews? Answer, In regard of his poverty and sufferings, the meanness and misery of his condition in the world. They expected that their Messiah should be a victorious prince, one that should rescue them from their enemies; instead of which they find this Jesus to be overcome by his enemies; that he had no power to defend himself, much less to deliver them; that was deserted by God, whom he called his father, forsaken by his followers, whom he styled disciples, scourged with rods, crowned with thorns, ignominiously treated, shamefully crucified; this was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and continues so to be. But how was Christ to the Greeks foolishness? Answer, The Gentiles despised the gospel of Christ, as an absurd, ridiculous, and ill-contrived fable; for what appearance could be more unbecoming God, and injurious to his perfections, than to take the frail garment of flesh, to be torn and trampled upon? They concluded the incarnation impossible, that a being infinitely perfect should unite with a nature so inferior to itself; and rejected the doctrine of our Saviour's death, as an impiety contumelious to God: they could not reconcile servitude with sovereignty, punishment with innocence, the lowest of human miseries with the highest of divine honours; and accordingly they esteemed it foolishness to expect eternal life from him that was put to death, and that he should bring them to the highest glory, who suffered himself in the lowest weakness. Thus was the preaching of Christ crucified to the generality of the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. But observe, 3. It was not thus unto all; there was a number of both converted and saved by the doctrine of the cross, unto whom Christ was the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Here note, 1. That Christ was the power of God: Isaiah styles him the mighty God, chap. ix. 6. Works of mighty power were performed by him; as the work of creation, Colos. i. 16. *By him were all things created in heaven and in earth.* The work of providence, Heb. i. 3. *He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.* The work of redemption, Gal. iii. 13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse*

for us. The curse and wrath of God was a burden that would have broke the back of angels; none could stand under it but Christ, and not he neither as mere man, but as supported by the infinite power of his Godhead. 2. Christ is the wisdom of God: his divine nature had a fulness of infinite and uncreated wisdom found with it; also his human nature had a fulness of infused and created wisdom found in it; and the redemption of man by Jesus Christ was a design of admirable wisdom. He that turns his back upon Christ, rejects the wisdom of God, and renders his ruin both dreadful and certain; they must perish eternally by the hand of strict justice, who will not be saved according to the methods of divine wisdom, which are to save us from hell by saving us from our sins. Observe, 4. The reason assigned, why the preaching of Christ crucified became the power of God unto salvation: *because the weakness of God is stronger than men*; that is, the ordinances and institutions of God, though they seem weak and foolish in the eye of the world, yet are more efficacious and powerful than all the wisdom of worldly men. Learn hence, that the ordinances and institutions of God, and particularly the preaching of the gospel, though despised by the men of the world, yet by the power of God have glorious operations, and produce wonderful effects. *The weakness of God is stronger than men*, that is, the weakest instruments which God uses, are stronger in their effects than the strongest which men can use: *and the foolishness of God is wiser than men*; not that there is either foolishness or weakness in God, but that which men account foolishness and weakness, and deride as such, doth yet overcome all their admired wisdom and strength: and if the wisdom of man cannot match the foolishness of God, how shall it vie and contend with the wisdom of God? No wisdom or power of man can stand before the foolishness and weakness, much less before the wisdom and power, of God: *The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are de-

spised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

Observe here, 1. The singular favour which our apostle calls upon the Corinthians to eye and view, namely, their effectual vocation and calling out of heathenism to the profession of Christianity: *You see your calling brethren*. Such as are exalted by God in any kind, ought to call to mind their former meanness; but those that are persuasively called by God out of a state of nature, ought frequently to observe and consider the worth and weight of that mercy, and the freeness of that divine favour: *Brethren, see*, and take notice of *your calling*. Observe, 2. That God has in all ages called some of all ranks and degrees of men, of the wise and great, the rich and noble, to the knowledge of himself and his Son. *Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, are called*; he doth not say, not any, but not many, lest the world should think that Christians were deceived through their simplicity and weakness; one rich Joseph of Arimathea, one honourable Nicodemus, one Crispus, a ruler of the synagogue, but not many men of might and power. Men of strong reason and sharpness of wit, are too proud and stout to stoop to the simplicity of the gospel, the humbling, self-denying terms of it; yet some of the wise and mighty are called, lest any thing in man should seem too hard for the grace of God; but not many, lest worth and worthiness in us should be thought the motive that rules God. Men of greatest fame and renown in the world, have been the fiercest enemies against Christ and Christianity. Galen, the chief physician, Porphyry, a chief philosopher, Lucian, a chief orator, with many others, were all professed enemies of the Christian religion. Wherefore observe, 3. That although God called some of the wise, rich, and noble, amongst the Jews and Gentiles, to espouse Christianity, yet the far greater number of those which hear his voice, and obey his call, are poor and mean, and in the world's esteem weak and foolish, base and despicable: *God hath chosen foolish things to confound the wise, and weak things to confound the mighty*. This was verified in the choice which God made of the apostles, who first planted Christianity in the world, and though illiterate fishermen, confuted and confounded the wisest among philosophers; and also in the choice God made of the primitive Christians, who first entertained the gospel, who were a poor, despised company, James ii. 5. *Hath*

not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom? This choice Christ thanks his Father for, *Matt. xi. 25.* and the wisdom of God therein deserves our highest admiration; because thereby, 1. God plainly showed that Christianity needed no worldly props to support it. As it was first planted and propagated by weak and contemptible means and instruments, so it is still upheld and supported without human policy or riches: God can outwit wise men by fools, and overpower mighty men by those that are weak; witness the apostles and primitive Christians. 2. God by this choice of the weak and foolish, of the base and despised, does pour contempt upon those things which are most admired among men, namely, the internal endowments of the mind, strong reason, and sharpness of wit; and the external gifts of providence, nobility of birth, riches, and honours. Lord! what shame and confusion of face will cover the noble and honourable, the great and mighty, the rich and wealthy, in the coming world, when they shall see those poor Christians, whom they despised for their poverty, scorned for their meanness of parts, as unworthy to come into their presence, highly exalted in the favour of God, and proclaimed the heirs of his kingdom! For as here God has more rent, and better paid him (as the great Landlord of the world) from many smoky cottages, than from divers great palaces, where persons wallow in plenty, and forget God; so will God own his faithful, though despised servants, at the great day, and make it evident to angels and men, that he *accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor*; but every one that here feared him, and wrought righteousness, shall be accepted of him, and rewarded by him.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Our apostle had in the foregoing verses acquainted the Corinthians how low and despicable their outward condition was in this world: he tells them the world looked upon them as *weak and foolish*, and, as such, despised and disdained them, but as a superabundant recompence for the despicable meanness of their outward condition, he tells them what they are in Christ Jesus, how rich they are as Christians; that Christ is made unto them *wisdom, righteous-*

ness, sanctification, and redemption. Observe here, 1. An enumeration of the believing Christian's privileges, received by virtue of his interest in Christ, and union with him; and they are *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*; to relieve us against our ignorance and blindness, he is our *wisdom*, the fountain of divine illumination, enabling us to see both our sin and danger; to discharge us from the burden of our guilt and obnoxiousness to divine wrath, he is our *righteousness*, the author of justification, procuring for us remission of sin, and acceptance with God; to free us from the pollution and power of sin, he is our *sanctification*; purging us by his Spirit, as well as pardoning by his blood, coming both by water and blood into our souls: and to set us at liberty from captivity and thralldom to sin and Satan, and the law, he is made our *redemption*, that is, the blessed author of a beloved redemption, not from Egyptian bondage or Babylonish captivity, but from the dominion of sin and servitude to Satan, from the wrath of God, from the curse of the law, from the danger and dread of death. Learn hence, That God hath stored up in Christ all that we want, a suitable and full supply for every need, and made it communicable to us: he is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and redemption, our all in all, our all in the want of all. Observe, 2. The method, way, and manner, by and after which believers come to be invested with, and made partakers of, these glorious privileges: *Christ of God is made unto us*; this denotes, (1.) That Christ with all his benefits becomes ours by a special and effectual application: he is *made unto us*. (2.) That this application of Christ is the work of God, and not of man; *of God he is made unto us*. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ, with all the precious fruits and invaluable benefits of his death, became ours by God's special and effectual application. Observe, 3. The reason here assigned why the whole economy of grace is put into the hand of Christ, why all is communicated by him, and derived from him, namely, that all the saints' glorying may be in him, and not in themselves: *That no flesh should glory in his presence, but as it is written, Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord, ver. 29, 31.* Infinite wisdom and sovereign pleasure has centred all grace in Christ; it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and the fulness that is in him is a ministerial fulness, it dwells in him on purpose to dispense to us, according as our exigencies do require, and our faith deserve; for *of him are we in Christ Jesus*,

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who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

CHAP. II.

AND I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God:

Our apostle had, in the foregoing chapter, declared how Christ had sent him to preach the gospel in the plainness and simplicity of it, *not with the wisdom of words*, ver. 17, that is, not in a pompous and flourishing way and manner of preaching, mingling the simplicity of the gospel with human wisdom: accordingly in this verse he tells them, that when, pursuant to his commission, he came and preached to them at Corinth, *he came not with excellency of speech*; that is, he studied not to gratify their curiosity with rhetorical strains or philosophical niceties, to please their wanton wits, but solidly to inform their judgments with the great and necessary duties of the gospel, and to furnish them with the strongest arguments and motives for a good life. This is preaching: but had he come with human wisdom, this would have detracted, 1. From the excellency of the gospel, which, like the sun, shines best with its own beams, scripture eloquence is most piercing and demonstrative, and convinceth a man by its own evidence; human wisdom charms the ear, but this strikes the conscience. 2. It would have detracted from the glory of God, which is more honoured by the plainness and simplicity of the gospel, than by the luxuriance of wit, or the most admired oratory in the world; all human wisdom must be denied when it comes in competition with, or stands in opposition to, the doctrine of the gospel. Observe farther, The title given to the gospel, which he preached amongst them in so much plainness and simplicity; he styles it the *testimony of God*. Where note, That the testimony of the apostles concerning Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, is called the *testimony of God*, because God testified and bare witness to the truth of these doctrines by signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

That is, "I determined not to discover to you, or display before you, the eloquence

and wisdom of the Greeks, or to give you any other knowledge but that of a crucified Saviour, which, alas! is to them foolishness." Yet must not these words be understood absolutely, but comparatively; not as if the apostles did absolutely despise or condemn all other study and knowledge, much less vilify true philosophy, logic, or oratory; for all knowledge is useful to him that knows how to refer it to right ends, and God has made nothing knowable in vain; but that all other knowledge, without the knowledge of Jesus Christ, is insignificant and ineffectual. Note here, 1. The subject-matter of St. Paul's study and preaching, it was Jesus Christ: not Jewish traditions, not the Gentiles' philosophy, but *him in whom are hid all the treasures of knowledge*. Note, 2. The special relation in which our apostle chose to study and preach Jesus Christ; and that was *as crucified*; Christ above all other subjects, and Christ crucified above all other considerations, because Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness: human wisdom despised the sufferings of Jesus Christ, but the apostle made them the subject of his study, and the scope of his preaching. Learn hence, 1. That as all of Christ, so more especially his death in all the mysteries of it, ought to be the principal subject of a Christian's study and knowledge. Learn, 2. That as there is no doctrine more excellent in itself, so none more necessary to be preached, than the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Oh! let ministers then preach, and by preaching prepare their people to receive the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And let both ministers and people count all things but dross in comparison of that excellency which is in the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle declares that his person was suitable to his preaching, both plain, neither pompous. 2 Cor. x. 10. He tells us, *That his bodily presence was weak and mean, and his speech contemptible*. Tradition tells us, that Paul (according as his name signifies) was a man of a very little stature, his voice small, and wanting that presence which some others had. Observe, 2. Some pain that the apostle was in, fearing lest the infirmity of his flesh should render him as a minister despicable in the eyes of any, or the course of the gospel be hindered and obstructed by his bodily infirmities; for this was he with them in *fear and much*

trembling. Nothing doth so much affect and afflict the ministers of Christ, as an apprehension and fear lest any thing in or from themselves should obstruct or hinder the success of the gospel which they teach. It is sad when our people take occasion, either from our poverty or mean appearance, to despise our message, or from any natural imperfections found with us; but much sadder, when such moral blemishes are found with us, as to render us the occasion of our own contempt, and the cause of our ministry's unsuccessfulness.

4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Here our apostle goes on, declaring after what manner he did, and did not, preach the gospel of Christ to the Corinthians. Note, 1. How he did not preach unto them: he tells us, that *his preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom*; that is, his preaching was not garnished with human eloquence, did not consist in rhetorical tropes, was not accompanied with the witty insinuations of artificial learning, which pleases the ear, but affects not the heart: therefore the apostles did not, like rhetoricians and orators, polish their discourses with an affected curiosity and exactness of language: but although they came in plainness, yet not in rudeness of speech; our apostle's preaching at Corinth was great and serious, pious and ardent, plain and profitable. With what brevity, without darkness; with what gravity, without affectation; with what natural eloquence, without metretreicious ornament, were St. Paul's discourses! A minister's words ought not to be *instantia*, but *inflammantia*; not high-swelling, but heart-inflaming words. Note, 2. How the apostle did preach unto the Corinthians; namely, *in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power*; that is, the doctrine he preached was accompanied with, and confirmed by, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, to convince them that Jesus was risen from the dead, and was made Lord of all, whom therefore they ought to believe and obey; he did not go about to bewitch men with eloquence, nor to entangle their minds by subtle reasonings, but he offered to men a sensible proof and demonstration of the truth of what he delivered, in those strange and miraculous operations to which he was enabled by the Holy Ghost. This

demonstration of the Spirit accompanying the preaching of the word, we are not now to expect; but the ministry of the word is still attended with a divine power of the Spirit, enlightening the understanding, and persuading the conscience; which may be called a demonstration of the Spirit, because the evidence of truth is no longer disputed or contradicted, but the understanding assents to the word as true, and the will embraces it as good. Note, 3. The reason assigned by the apostle why he preached the gospel in and after this plain and inartificial manner, namely, *That their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*; that is, that your faith or belief of the gospel should not seem to be obtained by human wisdom and eloquence, but be ascribed to a divine power, influencing such weak means as my plain preaching was amongst you; it is the praise of omnipotency to work by improbabilities: God delights to do great things by weak and unlikely means, knowing that the weakness of the instrument redounds to the greater honour of himself, the principal agent. Human faith is an assent to any thing credible, as credible upon the fallible testimony of man; and is founded upon, and resolved into, the authority of the speaker; but divine faith is an assent to any thing credible, as credible upon the infallible testimony of God, and is grounded on, and resolved into, the evidence of divine revelation. Upon this foot stood the Corinthians' faith, *not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*.

6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even the hidden wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

Our apostle here proceeds in discoursing to the Corinthians of the excellency of his ministry amongst them, to obviate the contempt which some might cast upon it for want of human eloquence, sublimity of learning, and accurateness of speech; as if the apostle had said, "Though the wise men of the world account me a fool, and my preaching foolishness, yet I speak the highest wisdom among them that are perfect, or fully instructed in the principles of the Christian faith." Although the discourses of the ablest ministers of the gospel seem jejune and dry to carnal hearts, yet they have an excellency of wisdom and depth of judgment in them, which

spiritual and judicious Christians do own and acknowledge. Here observe, 1. The title which the apostle gives to the gospel of Christ, which he preached: he styles it *the wisdom of God, the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world was*;—*the wisdom of God*, because it makes men truly wise, wise to salvation, directing us to use the best means in order to the best and highest end; and *the hidden mysterious wisdom of God*, because it lay hid in the secret counsels of God from all eternity, and afterwards lay hid under the Jewish types, but is now revealed by the ministry of Christ and his holy apostles; revealed in due time to our glory, that is, to be the means of our happiness and glory. The gracious purpose and design of God in the recovery of a lost world to happiness and glory, by the death and sufferings of his dear and only Son, was so mysterious and surprising, that it could never have entered the thoughts of men or angels, had not God himself discovered it by the revelation of the gospel. Observe, 2. The comparison which the apostle makes betwixt the wisdom of the gospel and the wisdom of this world: *The wisdom of this world, and of the princes of this world, comes to nought*. By the wisdom of the world, understand the wisdom of the heathen Gentile world, the learning of their admired philosophers, all which comes to nought: that is, it is of no significancy at all in order to the best and highest end, the salvation of the soul. Christianity or the knowledge of the gospel, is the best knowledge of the truest and highest wisdom; 'tis the best knowledge, because it contains the knowledge of God and our duty, which is the most excellent, the most necessary, and the most useful knowledge; and it is the truest wisdom, because it is to be wise for ourselves, and to be wise as to our chief interest; it propounds to us the noblest end, to wit, the glory of God, and our soul's salvation; and it directs us to use the best, the surest, and wisest means, for the certain obtaining of that end.

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

That is, which divine wisdom neither Caiaphas, nor Herod, nor Pontius Pilate, nor any of the Jewish or Gentile rulers, did understand. Where note, The apostle calls the learned rabbies, the admired philosophers among the heathen, the celebrated doctors among the Jews, *princes*: but presently adds a diminutive term, which

darkens all their glory: he styles them *the princes of this world*, utterly unacquainted with the wisdom of the other world. Observe farther, What a clear and full proof the apostle gives of their ignorance of this divine wisdom which the gospel reveals: *had they known it*, that is, practically known it, so as to believe it, to be influenced and persuaded by it, *they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*. Note here, 1. A royal title given to Christ, *The Lord of glory*. There belongs to him, (1.) An essential glory as God, which is unspeakable, yea, inconceivable, Phil. ii. 6. *He thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, that is, to have a peerage or equality with his Father in glory. (2.) A mediatorial glory as head of the church, which consists in that fulness of grace which is inherent in him, and in that dignity and authority which is put upon him. (3.) A passive glory, (as some divines call it,) of a glory which shall to all eternity be given to him by his redeemed ones, by saints and angels, upon the account of his mediatorial work: Rev. v. 12. *Worthy is the Lamb to receive glory, and honour, and worship*, for he hath redeemed us, &c. Note, 2. The indignity offered to this glorious person: *They crucified him*, they nailed him to an ignominious cross, and put him to death, as the vilest criminal, as the greatest malefactor. Note, 3. The cause of this indignity, and that was, ignorance; *had they known, they would not have crucified*, that is, had the princes of this world known, either who Christ was, or the work which he came about, they would not have crucified him, but adored him. But was their ignorance of Christ a sufficient excuse for crucifying him? In no wise, because it was not an invincible, but a wilful ignorance: they had sufficient means of instruction, by which they might have come to the knowledge of him, and of their duty to him; but they closed their eyes, and would not see.

9 But, as it is written, *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man*, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

These words; *Eye hath not seen, &c.* do

not immediately respect the happiness of heaven and a future state, though very often they are so applied; but they are primarily spoken of the gospel state, and of the blessings to be enjoyed by them that love God here: from whence a good argument may be drawn to prove the inconceivable happiness of the saints hereafter. Though they have felt and tasted joys unspeakable and full of glory, in the actings of their faith and love upon God at present; yet all that they have seen and heard, all that they have tasted and felt, in the way to heaven, falls infinitely short of the perfection and blessedness of that place and state. Lord! how will thy immediate presence, when we come into it, be a great surprise to those of us that have now the greatest acquaintance with it! Observe farther, The care and kindness of God towards his servants, in revealing to them by his Spirit those great and good things prepared for them, which surpass man's understanding: though "*eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived*, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, yet God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit." There is a two-fold revelation of the happiness of a future state: *Revelatio fidei, et revelatio visionis*, a revelation of faith, and a revelation by vision and sight; the former, believers have by the help of the Holy Spirit in this life, as *viatores*; the latter they shall ere long enjoy in heaven, as *comprehensores*, where they shall see as they are seen, and know as they are known. Observe, lastly, That the Holy Spirit, which thus revealeth hidden counsels to man, and searcheth the deep things of God, is omniscient, and really God. Mark 1. *He searcheth deep things*; he is not only acquainted with and privy to the surface and outside of things, but searcheth things to the bottom. And, 2. He searcheth not only the deep things of man, as of kings and princes, whose hearts are a great deep, but the deep things of God: therefore the Spirit is God; for as the apostle argues, ver. 11. *No man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him; even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God*, or he that is with God, in God, yea, God himself, as intimately with him as the soul is in the body. If the spirit that is in man were not man, it could never know the deep things of man, and if the Spirit of God were not God, he could never search and know the deep things of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might

know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Observe here, 1. The apostle declares what spirit they had not received, namely, the spirit of the world: *We have not received the spirit of the world*: that is, the spirit which suggests worldly wisdom, and savours only of worldly things: which acts and influences only worldly men. In the whole generation of worldly men there is the same worldly spirit, and this spirit of the world is an earthly spirit, it is a low, a little, and a narrow spirit: earthly things which are present and visible, such a soul gapes after, and grasps hard; but future and invisible things, which are far off and out of sight, are neither believed nor sought after. Observe, 2. The apostle declares what spirit they had received, namely, *the spirit which is of God*, and of what use that Holy Spirit is unto them: it teaches them *to know the things which are freely given them of God*: that is, the Holy Spirit sheweth us both what God is, and what the things of God are; we are enlightened with the knowledge of that grace and goodness of God which is discovered to us in the gospel, we know both divine mysteries and divine mercies, both what God hath done for us, and what he hath wrought in us, which are the things that are freely given us of God. Observe, 3. The apostle declares how he preached these spiritual things after a spiritual manner, *not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*: that is, not in the words and after the manner now counted by the Gentile philosophers to be learned and wise, but in the very words, and after the very manner, which the Spirit of God teacheth us. Where learn, That the holy apostles spake and wrote by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as well as the prophets of old time, and delivered nothing as from God but what God revealed to them by his Holy Spirit: and accordingly some interpret those words, *comparing spiritual things with spiritual*, that is, say they, comparing the things which were written by the Spirit in and under the Old Testament, with what is now revealed to us under the New.

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Observe here, 1. The subject spoken of, the natural man; not *sensuous*, the sensual, but *human*, the animal man, who acts only by the principles of human reason and worldly wisdom; who, though well furnished with intellectual and moral improvements, is yet destitute of the enlightening Spirit and renewing grace of God. Observe, 2. What is here affirmed of the natural man, with reference to spiritual things:—That he receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; and that he cannot know them. Where note, That it is not said, that he knoweth not the things of God, but *the things of the Spirit of God*; for there are some things of God, which a natural man may know, but the things of the Spirit of God, as truths purely evangelical, these he receiveth not, neither in his understanding, nor in his will. Note further, It is not barely said that he doth not, but that he cannot know them. Natural reason alone, by what helps soever assisted and improved, is altogether insufficient, without spiritual illumination, to apprehend supernatural and evangelical truth: not but that the Spirit of God in the work of illumination and conversion makes use of our reason; that flower of the soul is not blasted, but more opened, by the blowing of the blessed Spirit. Christianity doth not command us to throw away our reason, but to subjugate it; not to deny or disown our reason, but to captivate it to the obedience of faith; but the sense of the apostle is, that a person of the most exquisite natural accomplishments, and one that has improved his reason to the highest pitch, cannot behold evangelical mysteries in their proper light, or embrace them in their verity and beauty, without the superadded aids and assistances of the Holy Spirit. Observe, 3. The reasons declared why the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit; *because they are foolishness unto him*: that is, he accounts them foolishness when propounded to him, because he doth not see them proved from principles of natural reason, and by philosophical deductions, which is the only wisdom that he seeks after. The reason also is added why he cannot know them, *because they are spiritually discerned*; that is, the natural man cannot know divine things by that wisdom which he alone will be conducted by, and spiritual things must be spiritually discerned; for, being mysteries, they are not knowable by human reason, but by spiritual revelation. And if the wisdom of the world, that is, the learned and the wisest men in the world, were thus unable by the sharpest light of reason to discover evangelical mysteries

Lord! how endearing are our obligations for the benefit of supernatural revelation, whereby the hidden wisdom of God is made known to us.

15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

As if the apostle had said, "Although the *natural man*, who acteth only by principles of human reason, *receiveth not the things of the Spirit, nor can know them by any study of his own*, because they are spiritually discerned; yet *he that is spiritual*, that is, who hath the revelation and illumination of the Spirit of God, judgeth, or discerneth and trieth all things, that is, all spiritual matters; yet he himself is judged of no man, that is discerned by none who hath no higher principle than that of nature to discern things by." Learn hence, That such Christians as are enlightened and renewed with, guided and conducted by, the Holy Spirit of God, are the only proper judges of spiritual matters, able to understand their duty, and to discern between good and evil: *He that is spiritual judgeth all things.*

16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

That is, "What man, without divine revelation and spiritual illumination, ever knew or understood the mind of God so well, as to be able to instruct, direct, and inform the spiritual man about it? But we who are spiritual have the mind of Christ, and so are able to discern and direct, to guide and instruct, others about it." Learn hence, That none are fit and sufficient to interpret the mind of God unto others, who are not acquainted with it themselves. *We have the mind of Christ*, saith the apostle of himself, and his fellow-labourers in the gospel: his meaning is not only this, that they had the mind of Christ written in a book, but that they had a clear understanding of it, and so were fitted to interpret it to others. There is no such knowledge as the knowledge of experience, no teaching like unto experimental teaching.

CHAP. III.

Our apostle having, in the first chapter of this epistle reproved the Corinthians for their contentions and divisions, for the factions and parties which were found amongst them; in this chapter he returns to his former argument, and shows what a scandal their dissensions were to religion, and a reproach unto themselves.

AND I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even as unto babes in Christ.*

As if the apostle had said, "My brethren, although I speak the highest wisdom amongst them that are perfect, yet could not I speak unto you as unto spiritual persons, but as unto carnal; because the works of the flesh are found with you, and at the best you are but babes in Christ." Learn hence, That even amongst those who are the true and real members of the visible church, some are spiritual, some are carnal: some are men, some are babes. The apostle doth not call them absolutely carnal, as if they were wholly given up to the works of the flesh; but comparatively so, having too much carnality and corruption in them, and savouring too much of the flesh, though for the main truly pious: and therefore he uses the word *as* for mitigation sake; I could not speak unto you, but *as* unto carnal.

2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to *bear it*, neither yet now are ye able.

With milk, that is, with easy and common truths; not with the mysterious parts of gospel knowledge; with the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and not with the higher doctrines of Christianity, which neither then nor now are ye able to bear. Learn hence, That it is great prudence and wisdom in the ministers of Christ to instruct people in the first principles of religion, in order to their regularly advancing higher in Christianity. Ministers are spiritual nurses; they first must feed with milk, then with meat, otherwise they will not nourish, but destroy.

3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

That is, "Ye are in a great measure carnal; for your envy, strife, and divisions prove you to be so, and that you live according to the corrupt nature of man." They had the seed and root of grace abiding, and yet the relics of corruption remaining in them. There is a vast difference between weak grace and no grace, between the presence of sin and the power of sin. But how could the apostle here call the Corinthians carnal, and babes in Christ, when in chap. i. ver. 5, he affirmed that they were *enriched with all knowledge*

and utterance? Ans. That might be true as to some particular persons amongst them, who had those extraordinary gifts of tongues and miracles given them for the confirmation of the gospel; and yet what is here said be true, as to the generality of them, that they had too much carnality and unsoftened corruption remaining in them: *Ye are yet carnal.* Observe next, What proof he gives of it, namely, ocular demonstration; for, says he, there are among you *envying, strife, and divisions.* Envy, as the root, bears strife, and strife breeds divisions and factions. Envy is a pestilent lust, yea, a devilish lust; it makes another's good our grief. The devil envies God and man their happiness; he rejoices at the destruction of sinners, though he has no advantage by it; nay, though it increaseth his torment, because they were tempted by him to sin. There is nothing so like the devil as an envious man, with his cloven foot, to make division wherever he comes. Learn hence, 1. That envy is the cause and companion of strife. Learn, 2. That strife and contention, differences and divisions, are often found in the churches of Christ, and among particular Christians. Learn, 3. That so far as these prevail in and among any, it evidences that they are carnal, and walk as men.

4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

That is, one saith, in opposition to another, I am the disciple of Paul; and another I follow Apollos: and thus, probably, they call themselves after the names of their admired preachers, factiously crying up one minister above another. Hence learn, That although it be a people's duty to have a great and high esteem of the ministers of Christ, yet must not their respect degenerate into a sinful admiration of their persons; for their factious affecting of one minister above another, is both sinful and dangerous. When the gifts and abilities of one minister are cried up, to the contempt of others, it occasions enmity and dissension amongst ministers themselves, and their people also. *Are ye not carnal, when one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos;* It is added, chap. i. 12. *And I of Christ;* That is, they factiously said they were of, or for Christ, in opposition to his ministers. They pretended to the immediate teachings of Christ, and had no need of the ministry either of Paul or Apollos. Learn hence, That although Christ only is to be relied upon as head of his church, yet it is not his will we should despise his ministry,

or contemn his ministers, under that pretence.

5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers, by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

As if the apostle had said, "Neither Paul nor Apollos were the authors of your faith, but only ministerial helpers of it, as God is pleased to furnish them with gifts, and to give a blessing to their ministerial endeavours." Your ministers give out to you as God gives in to them: and therefore you ought not factiously to boast of their gifts, nor to make parties upon that account. Learn hence, 1. That the ministry of the word is the instituted mean and instrumental cause which God hath appointed for working faith in the hearts of men. 2. That God has furnished his ministers with variety of gifts and abilities; all which he makes use of in order to that end. 3. That therefore the ministers of Christ ought neither to be deified nor nullified, neither to be cried up nor trodden down; we are not efficient causes, but only instrumental means of faith. Render therefore unto God the glory of the author, and unto ministers the honour of the instrument. *Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers?*

6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

I planted; That is, I first preached the gospel among you, and first instructed you in the principles of Christ. I converted you to Christ: after me came Apollos, and watered the seed which I had sown: but God it was, and God alone, that caused the seed (which I sowed, and Apollos watered) to fructify and increase. Learn, 1. That it is an act of discriminating grace and favour in God, to send out his ministers to plant the gospel amongst a people that never before heard it. 2. That it is an act of farther favour and grace in God, to follow a people with a succession of ministers in order to the watering of the seed formerly sown amongst them. Learn, 3. That all that ministers can do, is but to plant and water; they cannot give increase, nor procure the success of their ministerial endeavours. Blessed be God that he doth not require the success of our labours at our hands. Woe unto us, should he say, "Either reconcile my people to me, or I will never be reconciled unto you." Diligence and endeavour are ours, the blessing and success is God's: he will never blame us for not doing *his* work.

7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

The sense is, "Neither he that planteth is to be esteemed as any thing, nor he that watereth as any thing, but the glory of all must be ascribed to God that giveth the increase;" yet must we understand the apostle speaking thus not absolutely, but comparatively; "They are not any thing, that is, not any thing of themselves alone, without the concurrence of the Spirit; what excellent gifts soever they have, they cannot of themselves make the word they preach effectual." Lord! how many souls do find both ministry and ministers to be nothing as to them; If they be any thing to purpose to any soul, 'tis God and not his ministers, that makes it so. The best and ablest ministry is nothing to any saving purpose, without God's power giving the increase.

8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour.

He that planteth and he that watereth are one: that is, in their design and scope, in the aim and end of their ministry; therefore they should not be factiously divided, either among themselves or by their hearers. Although there is a variety and diversity in the gifts of Christ's ministers, yet the intent and design of their ministry being one, they all ought to agree as one. They should be one in doctrine, and one in affection; aiming at one and the same mark, namely, the glory of God, and men's salvation, as they are one in their office, institution, and end. It follows, *Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour.* Thence learn, That every man, especially every minister, is sure to receive a proportionable reward hereafter, according to his labour and working for God here. Learn, 2. The approbation and distinction of this reward; *He shall receive his own reward:* implying that there are degrees of reward and glory in heaven, according as men have laboured more or less for God here on earth: according to this gradual diversity, shall be gradual degrees of glory. Learn, 3. The measure and rule of this reward: according to his labour, not according to his success; according to his industry, not according to the fruit of his ministry. If he labours faithfully, God will reward him proportionably, though few or none have believed his report.

9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry: ye are God's building.

Observe here, 1. The honourable title put upon the ministers of God, they are labourers or workers together with God. But in what sense are they so? *Ans.* Not so by any power of their own to produce any spiritual effect, as if they without God could work faith and repentance in the hearts of sinners; but they work only by an external application of the ministry of the word, and the means of grace to the souls of men. They are under-labourers to God, and God honours them by working by them, and working with them, for the conversion of men. Observe, 2. The honourable relation in which the church stands to God: the church and people of God are his husbandry, and his building: *Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.* Which phrase implies, 1. Power and goodness in making them so: a building is not of itself, nor is a field clothed with goodly corn of itself. 2. It implies dominion and absolute sovereignty: the master is the orderer of the house, and the husbandman the disposer of his ground. 3. It denotes propriety and interest, that we are not our own, but God's. The house is the owner's, not its own. God is theirs, and all that God has is theirs also.

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

Observe here, 1. The character which St. Paul assumes to himself, namely, that of a master-builder, yea, of a wise master-builder. But was it not vain-glorious in the apostle thus to describe himself? Is not Christ the great and wise master-builder of the church? Yes, undoubtedly: but the apostles were instruments in his hand, which he honoured with success: for which reason St. Paul thus speaks. Learn hence, That in some cases it is not vain-glory, but a necessary duty, for the ministers of Christ to magnify their work and office received from Christ. Observe, 2. The special work performed by St. Paul, the wise master-builder: *he laid the foundation;* that is, he first acquainted them with the rudiments and fundamental principles of the Christian religion, which they had never heard of before. Learn thence, That it is a special part of divine wisdom in a minister to lay at first a good founda-

tion of scripture knowledge in the minds and understandings of his people. Unless we having a knowing people, we are not like to have a gracious people. All our sermons will be dashed to pieces upon the rock of our people's ignorance, if they be not well catechised and instructed in the fundamentals of Christianity. Observe, 3. How very careful our apostle is to ascribe all his strength, his assistance and success, as a master-builder, to the grace of God: *According to the grace of God given to me.* Learn thence, That it is the property of every godly man, much more of every gracious minister, to attribute all that good which is either received or done by him, to the grace of God. What man ever received more grace from God, or did more service for God, than St. Paul? And so enlarged is he upon all occasions in magnifying the grace of God, that he is never satisfied in exalting of it: *Not I, but the grace of God that was with me, &c.* Observe, 4. The cautionary direction by St. Paul, to all succeeding ministers of Christ, to take heed that they lay no other foundation than what was laid by him; and that they build suitably upon that foundation: *Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon.* Learn hence, That the ministers of Christ are to take especial care that they preach no other doctrine than what Christ and his apostles preached, and laid as the foundation of Christianity; and that they do not build upon that foundation any doctrine which may endanger their own or their people's salvation: *I have laid the foundation, and let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

That is, no other true foundation can man lay, than that which is already laid by me; namely, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and faith in him. The ministers of Christ ought to lay no other foundation than Christ: they are to lead their people to, and build them upon, no other rock but Christ. All threatenings, promises, commands, duties, privileges, are to be preached and pressed with respect to Jesus Christ; he is to be laid as the only foundation in respect of knowledge, in respect of faith, in respect of justification, in respect of intercession and acceptance with God. The minister's great work is to set Christ forth in all his glorious fulness, to represent him in all his offices, as a glorious object for the eye of our faith to look unto, and fix upon.

12 Now if any man build upon
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this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

In these words the apostle speaks of two sorts of preachers, under the metaphor of builders. 1. Some that are sound and orthodox, who hold the foundation, and build upon it *gold, silver, and precious stones*; that is, such sincere and wholesome doctrine as will bear the touchstone and trial. 2. Others that are unsound and erroneous, who hold indeed the foundation of Christianity, but build upon it such doctrines as will not bear the trial, expressed by wood, hay, and stubble, which are not proof against the fire. Learn hence, That the doctrine of Christ, and the truths of the gospel, are very excellent and exceeding precious; compared to gold, silver, and precious stones, for their usefulness and preciousness. Learn, 2. That all errors and falsehoods in religion, all erroneous and false doctrines, though not fundamental, are yet no better than hay or stubble, vain and unprofitable, vile and contemptible. Observe, 3. As a twofold builder described, so a twofold event declared: some men's works, that is, their doctrines and practices, will abide the fire; others will be burnt up, and suffer loss. Where by the fire, understand the word and Spirit of God. A probatory, not a purgatory fire, is here intended: because it is said to burn not the person but the action, and every action too, of every man. Now the popish purgatory fire tries not all persons, some are exempted, as martyrs: and not all actions neither, but wicked ones only; whereas this fire shall try every man's work. The meaning is, that the light of God's word and Spirit will manifest the verity or vanity, the soundness or falseness, of doctrines delivered by all preachers. Sound doctrine, that, like good metal, will endure the furnace, shall be rewarded; but such doctrines as will not endure the trial, shall miss of the reward. Learn hence, 1. That all the ways and works of wickedness in general, and all hidden and secret ways of false doctrine in particular, God will one day reveal and make manifest: *Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall*

declare it. Learn, 2. That the true and sincere doctrine of the gospel is firm and durable, and such as will abide the closest trial; yea, and will grow more illustrious and glorious thereby. Learn, 3. That men may hold the foundation, and maintain the fundamentals of Christianity, and yet may so superstruct thereupon it, and superadd so many things unto it, whereby they may greatly endanger their own and others' salvation. *They shall be saved, yet so as by fire:* that is, with great difficulty, having exposed themselves to the utmost hazard and danger. The speech is proverbial, and signifies both the greatness of the danger, and the difficulty of escaping it; intimating that errors in judgment endanger a person's salvation as well as ungodliness in practice. He that has a due care of his soul's salvation, will be as well afraid of erroneous principles as he is of debauched practices; for error is as damnable as vice: the one is an open road, the other a by-path, to hell and destruction.

16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

Our apostle here, in the judgment of some interpreters, makes use of a farther argument to convince the Corinthians of the evil of their divisions. They are the church and temple of God, therefore not to be profaned by divisions; *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?* As if the apostle had said, "You Corinthians, by being converted to Christianity, are become a Christian church, an holy temple, in which the Spirit of God doth dwell, and where the spirit of division ought not to dwell; for if any man defile the temple of God by dividing the church into factions and parties, him will God destroy; for the temple of the Lord is holy, and not to be profaned by your dividing lusts: which temple ye are." Learn hence, 1. That the people of God met together to worship him, are the church or spiritual temple of God. 2. That the Spirit of God dwells in the church, or temple of God; and this dwelling implies propriety, familiarity, authority, residency, and fixedness of abode. Learn, 3. That such as defile the holy temple of God, either by factious divisions or erroneous doctrines, do provoke God to destroy them; that is, to punish them with temporal destruction, and, without repentance, with eternal damnation: *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.*

18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. 20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

Observe here, 1. A word of caution: *Let no man deceive himself.* Self-deceit is the ground of all other deceit. Whatever deceit is abroad, it begins at home. A deceitful heart will not spare so much as itself, although the self-deceit be most unnatural and monstrous, most fatal and pernicious. Observe, 2. A word of exhortation: *If any man seem to be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise:* that is, "If any man seem to be wise in the wisdom and learning of this world, let him embrace the doctrine of Christ, which the world calls foolishness, and so become a fool to them, that he may be wise according to the wisdom of God." Learn hence, That all human and worldly wisdom cometh far short of, and is but a mere shadow and appearance, compared with the wisdom of God manifested in the gospel. Observe, 3. A word of enforcement: *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.* 'Tis so in God's opinion and estimation; he accounts it so. If we compare wit with grace, learning with religion, a rational head with a gracious heart, the latter infinitely transcends the former in the account of God. All the admired wisdom of worldly men is nothing but contemptible folly in the esteem of God. The world's wise man is God's fool. Observe, 4. A double testimony, which the apostle produces out of the Old Testament to prove his assertion, that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God: the first is out of Job v. 13. *He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.* Learn hence, That no wisdom or craftiness of man can stand before the wisdom and power of God. The second testimony is taken out of Psalm xciv. 11. *The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vain;* that is, the choicest and best thoughts of the wisest men are vain, yea, vanity.

21 Therefore let no man glory in men: for all things are yours; 22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; 23 And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

Here the apostle closes his discourse with an inference not to glory in any teacher whatsoever, either in Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, seeing they were all theirs; that is, all the apostles and ministers of Christ, from the highest to the lowest, from the greatest to the least, and all their ministerial gifts and labours, are all ordained and appointed by God for their use and service: *All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas.* Learn hence, That all ministers, and ministerial abilities, are wholly for the church's service, and spiritual advantage: all their power is for the church's preservation, all their gifts are for the church's edification. Their message is for the church's comfort and consolation: thus all things, in and belonging to the church, are ours. Next he mentions the things of the world are ours. *Or the world;* that is, all the good things in the world are ours, houses, lands, honours, friends, relations, so far as God sees them good for us. But are there not many that are Christ's who want houses and friends, and other comforts; how then can they be said to have them? *Ans.* 1. They have all things eminently and transcendently in God and Christ, by whom they have a title to all things, *Rev. xxi. 7.* 2. They have all things virtually, in their contentment and satisfaction of mind which they do enjoy. 3. They have all things eventually: they have the good of all things, when they have not the actual possession of all things: their very wants, in the event, work for good. *Or life;* this is ours two ways; the comfort of life is ours, and the end of life is ours, with the true use of it; for the sincere Christian only lives to purpose, by answering the great end of life, which is the promoting God's glory, and securing his own salvation. *Or death;* that which is in itself so terrible is for the believer's advantage, their friend, their privilege, their passage to heaven, their deliverer from sin, the perfecter of their grace; when we come at heaven, and not till then, we shall fully understand what this meaneth, *Death is ours.* *Or things present;* that is, all the events of providence which befall us, whether prosperity or adversity, health or sickness, riches or poverty, they are all sanctified to us, and are instrumental for the sanctifying of us. They are covenant blessings, and dispensed in love to us. *Or things to come;* that is, all future things which may befall us in this world, and in the world to come, shall be to our abundant advantage; whether they be merciful or good things, or grievous and sad things: particularly death is to come, but to die is gain. Christ's death was the

death of death; he has disarmed death of its sting; the believer fears not its dart; it is not an hurting, but an healing serpent: there is no venom or malignity in it, but that which was before in the number of threatenings, is now brought within the compass of the gospel promises: all things are ours, life or death, things present and things to come. *And ye are Christ's:* that is, not Paul's or Apollos's disciples or servants, but only Christ's, therefore glory only in him. Consecrate all to the service of Christ, and resign up all to the will of Christ; ye are Christ's by donation, ye are Christ's by redemption, ye are Christ's by conquest; ye are therefore to glory in him, and in him only. *And Christ is God's:* that is, as you are Christ's, and for his glory; so Christ, as Mediator, is God's, and for his glory. He is God's servant, to do his will, to execute his pleasure. He was begotten of his Father before all time. He sought not his own, but his Father's glory, in the doctrine which he preached, in the miracles which he wrought; but lived in an entire resignation to his Father's pleasure. Lord! how will it shame us thy servants, to follow thy servant Christ, and to be called by his name, if we seek not his glory and exalt not his will, and live not to his praise, who died for us and rose again!

CHAP. IV.

There are two extremes which persons are apt to run into, with reference to the ministers of Christ; namely, to extol, admire, and even idolize some; and to depress, undervalue, and even vilify others. To cure the former evil was the great design and endeavour of St. Paul in the foregoing chapter; to prevent the latter, and to preserve that due honour, and keep up that just esteem, which is payable to all ministers of Christ, is the design and scope of the apostle in the chapter before us; and accordingly thus he speaks.

LET a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

As if the apostle had said, "Although I warned you, in the foregoing chapter, against an undue esteem of your pastors, and against a factious preference of some before others, to the great scandal of religion, and the prejudice of the gospel; yet I speak not this to draw you off from paying that due honour and deserved respect which belongs to their character. But I desire you to account them all, neither more nor less, but as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." Here observe, 1. A double character given of an evangelical pastor. He is, (1.) A

minister of Christ: that is, a person deputed by the command, and invested with the authority, of Christ, to administer in holy things, to preach the word, administer the sacraments, execute church censures; being in all things an example to the flock! and the people are to account the office and work of the ministry, as a divine institution and appointment of Christ in his church; whoever slights or opposes the ministry, flies in the face of Christ himself. (2.) He is a *steward of the mysteries of God*; and that in a twofold respect. First, He is a steward of the truths of God; secondly, of the ordinances of God. Of the truths of God he is a steward, to open and explain them for the spiritual edification of all Christians, and to defend and maintain them against the opposition of all adversaries: God's steward must not suffer vermin to destroy the provision of God's household. He is a steward of the ordinances of God also: which he is obliged to dispense in all faithfulness to his congregation. 1 Peter iv. 10. *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.* Observe, 2. As the ministers of Christ are described, they are *stewards*; so the qualification of a steward is declared, and that is faithfulness: *It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.* What ground is there for trust, where there is no truth? Now this faithfulness in our stewardship includes, (1.) Purity of intention; a pure end in all our services will give us abundance of comfort at the end of our service. (2.) Sincerity and integrity of heart: a faithful minister is a sincere-hearted minister, who preaches his sermons first to himself, and then to his hearers. (3.) Ministerial diligence: a slothful minister can never be a faithful steward; we must study the truths of God to paleness, preach them to faintness, maintain and defend them with steadfastness: we look for happiness from God as long as he is in heaven, and he expects faithfulness from us as long as we are upon earth. (4.) Faithfulness in stewardship includes impartiality in all the administrations of Christ's house: we must take the same care of, manifest the same love unto, attend with the same diligence upon, the poorest and meanest in our congregations, as we do the rich, the great, and the honourable: for all our souls are at one price, and rated at one value in our Lord's book. O! let us take care we be impartial stewards, for we must shortly give an account of our stewardship before an impartial God.

3 But with me it is a very small

thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not my own self:

Not as if the apostle was unconcerned whether the Corinthians had a good esteem of him, or not; or were regardless of his reputation among men: but the meaning is, he did not much value himself upon the opinion and judgment which any persons had of him, knowing that his case would not be finally determined by any man's judgment, nor yet by his own. Therefore, says he, *I judge not myself*; that is, definitively, so as to acquiesce in that judgment: for I may be deceived in my judgment of myself, therefore I leave myself to the judgment of God. It is a singular support to all the members, but especially the ministers of Jesus Christ, that they and their actions have a more righteous judge to be examined and tried by, than either the world or themselves; the world's judgment may falsely condemn them, their own judgment may flatter and deceive them, but the judgment of God will deal impartially with them.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

These words are not to be understood absolutely and universally, but relatively and respectively; not as if the apostle knew no sin in himself, (for he went groaning under a body of sin to his grave,) but with respect to his ministry; his conscience cleared him of all unfaithfulness and neglect of duty. *Though I know nothing of unfaithfulness by myself, yet am I not thereby justified* at God's tribunal; for he that judgeth me is the Lord. Note here, 1. St. Paul's justification of himself: before men he knew nothing by himself; that is, in general, his conscience did not accuse him of any gross prevaricating with God, and in particular did not charge him with any negligence or unfaithfulness, in respect of his office; he had not been an unfaithful steward of divine mysteries, nor guilty of any crimes that his adversaries could charge him with. Note, 2. His disclaiming all justification thereby in the sight of God: *Yet am I not thereby justified.* His sincerity did comfort him, but could not justify him; the righteousness of the ablest and best of men, is not pleadable before the righteous and holy God for justification. The reason given why the apostle did not, durst not, plead his own righteousness before God for justification: *For he that judgeth me is the Lord*; as if he had said, "Were I to appear at man's bar,

I doubt not but to come off well enough, for none knows me so well as myself; but I have to do with an heart-searching God, who knows me better than myself; and when God comes to look over my work, he will spy that which the most eagle-eyed person cannot spy. Therefore there is no standing for me, a creature, before God, in any creature-purity. Angelical perfection is imperfect in his sight: angels, though they have not the least spot of sin in their natures, yet are they chargeable with folly, their nature being potentially sinful, and the heavens themselves are not clean in God's sight.

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have-praise of God.

Our apostle's design in these words, is not to condemn all judgment of persons, words, or actions, or to oblige us to suspend our judging till the day of judgment; but only forbids rash censuring, unadvised, uncertain, and unseasonable judging of the hearts and final states of men. We may judge what appeareth, but not what is hidden and unseen: for the judging of hidden things is referred to him from whom nothing is hidden. Learn hence, That to take upon us to judge the heart, or to judge that which doth not appear, is to assume the office, and to take upon us the place of God: only he that is invisible can look into that which is invisible. Observe farther, The person spoken of, who makes manifest the counsels of the heart, and brings to light the hidden things of darkness: it is Jesus Christ. Judge nothing till the Lord come, the Lord Jesus Christ. A strong argument to prove the divinity of our blessed Saviour; he that has knowledge of the heart, of the secrets of the hearts of all men, and has all these subject to his judgment, is undoubtedly God. But Christ ascribes all this knowledge to himself, Rev. ii. 23. *All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give to every one according to his works:* therefore he is essentially and really God. Observe lastly, What will be the issue and consequence of our Lord's knowing and judging the secrets of men: *Then shall every one have praise of God;* that is, every one shall have praise that is praiseworthy; every good man, though now dispraised and despised, though censured and condemned, though

loaded with scandals and false reports, yet then every righteous man shall have praise from Christ the righteous Judge.

6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

Here the apostle prosecutes his former argument afresh, that neither the Corinthians, nor any other Christians, should so overvalue and magnify some ministers of the gospel, as to undervalue and despise others, making men of eminency the heads of factions and parties; but that they esteem all ministers as instruments only in Christ's hand, doing nothing of themselves, but assisted by the grace and strength of God, to whom therefore the success and entire praise of all their labours is due. This is to think of them according to what is written, chap. iii. 6, 8. *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers?* Learn hence, That it is too usual when people have a very great and high esteem of the ministers of Christ, to overvalue themselves by reason of their relation to them and dependence upon them; and whilst they honour and magnify some, to vilify and disesteem others. This is the fault which all along our apostle has been condemning since he began this epistle, and he has not yet done with it; for thus he proceeds,

7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?

As if the apostle had said, "Who is it that maketh one minister to differ from and excel another? Is it not God? If so, then let those ministers that have received the greatest gifts from God, whom the inspiration of the Almighty hath made most wise and understanding, be most humble themselves; and let none take occasion from thence to despise others who have received less. Learn hence, that ministers of great abilities, eminent for gifts and graces, are in great danger of being puffed up themselves, and their people also too prone to glory in them. There is a temptation in good things, yea, in the best things, to pride; the best men on earth may be overheated by what they have received from heaven; and Satan

may take occasion even from our raptures in spirit to puff us up with spiritual pride; therefore our apostle puts forth this soul-humbling and pride-mortifying expostulation, *What hast thou that thou hast not received? who made thee to differ?* There is nothing wherein one minister, or indeed one man, differeth or is distinguished from another, or wherein he excelleth another, but it is given him from God; it is God, and not himself, that makes him to differ. It is a high degree of pride for any man to say, *Ego discrevi meipsum*, I of myself have made myself to differ.

8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God that ye did reign, that we might also reign with you. 9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ: we are weak, but ye are strong: ye are honourable, but we are despised.

These words are looked upon by interpreters as an ironical reproof given by St. Paul to the Corinthians, in which with an holy derision he rebukes the over-weening and high opinion which they had of their present attainments and spiritual perfections; *Ye are full, &c.* As if he had said, "Now you think yourselves so full and rich in all kinds of knowledge, that you despise your spiritual fathers, myself and Apollos, who first converted you to the faith; we are looked upon as dull fellows, not worthy to be named in the same day with your new admired teachers. You advance yourselves as much above us, as a king is above his own subjects. I wish with all my heart your happiness were real, that we might be sharers in it; but verily I fear that you are only puffed up with notions: I fear ye have little except in conceit, and there you have a great deal too much." Learn hence, That spiritual pride (that is, boasting of, and glorying in, the gifts, graces, or privileges, which are conferred upon us) is a sin which the devil strongly tempts, and professors are extremely prone, to the practice and commission of. *Now ye are full, now ye are rich.* Observe next, As the flourishing condition of the Corinthians is ironically described, so the afflicted and persecuted condition of the apostles is plainly declared: *We are a spectacle to the world, and*

appointed to death. The original word is, We are set as upon a theatre or stage, in public view; heaven, earth, and hell, are spectators; God, angels, and men, wait to see the glorious triumphs of our faith and fortitude. What a great solemnity is there at the sufferings of a saint! Bloody persecutors are for making all the members, especially all the ministers of Christ, a spectacle to the world: an allusion to the Roman spectacles, who carried those persons about for a sight that were to fight with wild beasts; and if they escaped, were only reserved for slaughter against another day. Thus the apostles in their martyrdom conflicted with all sorts of misery, and with death itself at last. Observe lastly, How the false professors of Christianity branded the apostles with folly for exposing themselves thus to sufferings and death for the sake of Christ: *We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ*; that is, in your account we are fools, because we run so many hazards for the sake of Christ; but you are wise in your profession of Christ, because you have an art to profess him, and yet enjoy outward prosperity with him. The wisdom of suffering Christians, in hazarding all for Christ, and laying down their lives in the cause of Christ, has been always accounted weakness and folly by the men of the world. *We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ.*

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; 12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; 13 Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the earth, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day.

Observe here, 1. The several kinds of sufferings which the holy apostles were exposed to, and exercised with; namely, hunger, and want, poverty, and reproach, persecution, and death. They suffered in their bodies by hunger, and nakedness, and stripes; in their names, by scandals and reproaches, being accounted the *filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things*. The word, say some, signifies that dirt and filth which scavengers do rake together in the streets, and carry to the dung-hill. Others think it an allusion to the sacrifices which the heathens used for the lustration of a city, who when their city was under any great calamity, chose out some very base,

vile, and nasty person, and burnt him in a ditch, and cast his ashes into the sea, as a sacrifice unto Neptune, saying, Be thou a purgation for us. Such a base and vile esteem had the world of the holy apostles and messengers of Christ. Lord! to see such a man as St. Paul going up and down the world with a naked back and empty belly, without a house of settled abode to hide his head in; one that did more service for God in his day, than perhaps we have done him all our days: can we, the ministers of Christ, complain of hard usage from the world, when we consider that this great apostle suffered in the world! Observe, 2. The duration and continuance of the apostles' sufferings, *Even unto this day, and unto this present hour.* It was not only at their first entrance upon the apostolical office, when all the world was set against Christianity, that they met with this usage, but all along, from the first hour they began to preach the gospel, even unto this hour, did they meet with opposition and persecution. As long as there is a devil in hell, and wicked men upon earth, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution: but surely the dregs in this cup have in all ages been reserved for the ministers of Christ Jesus; as if to preach were nothing else but to stir up the rage, and be blotted with the obloquies of men. Observe, 3. The holy and humble behaviour, the meek and patient carriage and demeanour, of the apostles, under all this load and burden of reproach and scorn, disgrace and shame, persecution and ill usage: *being reviled, we bless.* When we meet with opprobrious words, we are so far from rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, that we speak well of, and wish well to, the persons that are thus injurious to us: *Being persecuted by them, we suffer it patiently from them; being defamed by any of them, we entreat God for them, to pity and pardon them; and we entreat them to pity themselves.* To publish invectives against those, though the worst of men, who reproach and persecute us, is a modern piece of zeal, which the blessed apostles and holy sufferers in the primitive times were not only little acquainted with, but perfect strangers to.

14 I write not these things to shame you, but, as my beloved sons, I warn you. 15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for, in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 16 Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

Observe here, 1. The holy ingenuity of the apostle, discovered in the sharp reproofs given to the Corinthians: it was to warn them of their duty, not to reproach them for their crimes: *I write not these things to shame, but warn you.* The ministers of God take far greater pleasure in exhorting people to be good, than in complaining of their badness. Observe, 2. The relation which St. Paul stood in to the Corinthians: he was their spiritual father, and they his children. He first converted them to Christianity by his ministry amongst them. *In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. In Christ Jesus:* that is, by the gracious influence of the Spirit of Christ, accompanying my preaching, I have turned you from idols to serve the living and true God. Hence it is that I have such an endeared affection for you, and challenge a deserved respect from you. Learn from hence, That persons may and ought to have a great value for, and bear a tender respect towards, those ministers whom God hath honoured, by making them instruments of their first conversion, and bringing home to Christ. These are in a proper sense their spiritual fathers: and verily there is no greater love, no stronger affection betwixt any relations upon earth, than between the ministers of Christ and such of their beloved people as they have been happily instrumental to bring home to God. Observe, 3. The apostle having asserted his relation to them, that of a spiritual father, challenged from them their duty of obedient children; namely, to follow him in the steps of holiness and sincere obedience: *Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.* Lord, what holiness of life, and exactness of conversation, ought to be found with the ministers of Christ, seeing they are to be patterns as well as preachers; and their people not only to be their hearers, but their followers! We are to tread out before them the steps which they are to take towards heaven; and it will be found at the great day as dangerous to have misled them by our example, as by our doctrine. Happy those ministers that can safely say to their people, *Be ye followers of us.*

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

No sooner had St. Paul planted a church in Corinth, but, by the envy and malice of Satan, most notorious disorders, and scan-

dalous abuses, were cast into it. To obviate which great and growing mischief, he writes them his mind in this epistle. But lest this method should prove ineffectual, because writing at a distance is not so moving as conferring face to face, he sends Timotheus unto them, to excite and persuade them to their duty, by bringing to their remembrance his ways which were in Christ, both what he had formerly taught, and did yet continue to teach in every church: *I have sent unto you Timotheus, my beloved Son, and faithful in the Lord.* Here note, 1. The messenger sent to them, described by his name, Timotheus, or Timothy; by his relation, his *beloved Son*; that is, his son in the faith, his spiritual son, possibly converted, undoubtedly instructed by him in the principles of Christianity. He is farther described by his zeal and diligence in the work of the gospel: *faithful in the Lord*, that is, faithful in the work of the Lord. A noble character of a gospel minister: faithful to God, faithful to souls, faithful in his intentions, faithful in his endeavours, faithful in all the administrations of Christ's house; faithful and affectionate towards the poor of the flock, remembering that all souls are rated at one value in his Master's book; faithful in public preaching, faithful in private inspection. Happy are the people who have such faithful persons for their spiritual guides and pastors. Note, 2. The message and errand Timothy was sent upon; namely, to acquaint the Corinthians with St. Paul's doctrine and practice, and to excite and persuade them to their duty, by bringing his ways to their remembrance. Where observe, That St. Paul had led so holy and unblamable a conversation in every place where he had lived, that he is neither afraid nor ashamed that his course of life should be discovered and made known to all the world. A great example for our imitation, to walk before God and our people with such care and caution, with such heedfulness and circumspection, that we need not blush, when either our doctrine or practice are published before all the churches of Jesus Christ. Timothy shall acquaint you *with my ways, and with what I teach everywhere in every church.*

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you. 19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will; and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. 20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

Observe here, 1. The advantages which

the height and haughtiness of some envious teachers took, upon St. Paul's absence from Corinth; they entertained low and contemptuous thoughts of him, and vaunted that he durst not come before them, nor stand among them. Observe, 2. St. Paul's positive resolution to come again to Corinth, with God's permission, with the reason for that resolution: *I will come, and know, not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power*; that is, I will certainly come and try your boasting, envious teachers, not by their plausible words and fine talk, discovering who hath the smoothest tongue: but I will examine the power; that is, first their authority to preach; and next, what power and efficacy there is in their preaching; and lastly, what power and influence their preaching has upon their own practice: I will find out what real good they have done among you, after all their ostentatious braggings. Behold here the true and great end of episcopal visitations. *For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power*; that is, Christianity doth not consist in talking, but in doing; not in vaunting, but in performing great things. But by *power*, here, may be understood, a power of working miracles for confirming and propagating the gospel, which the apostles had, but these teachers at Corinth had not. To convince men at first of the truth of Christianity, the dead were raised, the devils cast out, and many mighty wonders wrought by the apostles; by all which the gospel doctrine was planted, propagated, established, and confirmed. The kingdom of God, or the gospel church, was not raised at first, or carried on since, by the wisdom of words, by the charms of popular eloquence and rhetorical flourishes; but by a plain way, and familiar manner of preaching the doctrines of the gospel, attested by miracles, and accompanied with works of divine efficacy and power. Thus the *kingdom of God was not in word, but in power.*

21 What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

As if the apostle had said, "Come I will among you, to regulate disorders, and to rectify abuses: now choose how I shall come; whether in the milder way of kindness, love, and meekness towards you, or exercising the power God has given me, of inflicting corporeal punishments on offenders, by delivering them to Satan as God's executioner upon their bodies." Note here, 1. A power, which the apostle intimates himself to have in the Christian church; namely, the power of the rod,

that is, a power of inflicting the severest of corporal punishments, even death itself, upon notorious offenders. Thus Elymas the sorcerer was smitten with blindness by St. Paul, *Acts* xiii. Ananias and Sapphira struck dead by St. Peter, *Acts* v. Hymenæus and Philetus delivered unto Satan, *1 Tim.* i. 20. It was usual with God, in the earlier days of the gospel, to give Satan leave to seize the bodies of such as were, for their obstinate perseverance in sin, cut off from the communion of the church; who plagued them with diseases, and sometimes with death, which is called *the destruction of the flesh*, *1 Cor.* v. 5. Note, 2. The necessary reason for investing such a power, so great a power as this, in the apostle; because then there being no civil power of the magistrate on his side, had he been destitute of this extraordinary power, to punish bold and hardened transgressors, he could never have vindicated Christianity from contempt, much less have conciliated any tolerable respect either to himself or it. People would have despised his person, and made a mock of his new religion; whereas, finding him clothed with this power, great fear fell upon the church, yea, on as many as heard these things, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, *Acts* v. Note, 3. How loath and unwilling the apostle was to exercise this power of his, and to come unto them with a rod, desiring rather to use fair and gentle methods, and to come unto them in love, and in the spirit of meekness. His paternal tenderness and fatherly affection prompted him to menace and threaten punishment, but only to the end that he might not execute and inflict it, provided they would be but obliged by kindness, and reclaimed by candid usage. Note, 4. That the apostle was sometimes forced out of mere pity to take his rod into his hand, to use sharpness, though with great reluctance; scourging them, to show his compassion to them. In like manner must ecclesiastical rulers, to the end of the world, in order to maintain the church's purity and peace, by church-censures chastise that vice which doth deface the one, and those divisions that do disturb the other.

CHAP. V.

The apostle in this chapter doth sharply rebuke the church of Corinth for their great negligence in punishing scandalous offenders, directing to excommunication, as the proper remedy for redressing such offences, and declaring the end and intention of that ecclesiastical censure to be, the destruction of sin, and the salvation of the sinner. For thus he writes,

IT is reported commonly *that there is fornication among you, and such*
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fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

Observe here, 1. The persons, or the people blamed. The famous church of Corinth has fornication, nay, incest, charged upon her. Heinous sins may creep into the best and purest churches, yet doth not a church presently cease to be a true church; nor are Christians presently to separate from the communion of a church, because heinous sins and scandalous offences are found in it. This church of Corinth was a true church, and it was schismatical to separate from her communion, although erroneous principles and scandalous practices were found amongst the members of it. Observe, 2. The crime charged upon them; namely, that fornication was found amongst them, yea, the highest degree of fornication; to wit, incest. By the general name of fornication, all uncleanness is forbidden, all unlawful conjunctions and sinful mixtures are condemned. By incest is to be understood the uncleanness of a person with some near relation, as a mother, a sister, &c. Observe, 3. The crime of incest is not barely expressed, but amplified and aggravated by its heinousness, *such as was not named among the Gentiles*. Not but that many of the more brutish Gentiles were guilty of this sin, but the more civilized amongst the Gentiles did by the light of nature detest and abhor it, condemn and forbid it. Lord! how sad is it, that what is not so much as named among the heathens should be practised among Christians! whereas such sins ought not to be so much as named among Christians, which are practised among the heathen. Observe, 4. The notoriousness of the crime: *It is commonly reported*; the fame, or rather the infamy, of the fact, spread far and near; the sin became so public, that it could not be coloured, much less concealed. All sin is a work of darkness. Uncleanness particularly delights in darkness; therefore the notoriety of the act bespoke the impudence of the agent. Ah, sad day! when men declare their sin like Sodom, they hide it not. When both shame and fear are cast off, sin hath a hard forehead, a brazen brow.

2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

Here note, 1. The fault charged upon the church: they did not censure this offender, therefore the apostle censures

them. The tolerating of scandalous sins in particular members of churches, is a thing very displeasing to Christ, and offensive to his ministers. Note, 2. As they did not censure the offenders, so neither did they mourn for the offence, as they should and ought to have done. Learn, That the falls of particular members of churches are a just cause of mourning to the whole church: as members of the same body, we should sympathize with one another; what the natural members do, the mystical members ought to do. Note, 3. The cause of both, why they did neither censure the offender, nor mourn for the offence: *they were puffed up*; partly with pride of their own gifts, and partly with vain-glory, upon account of their admired teachers. Now this pride hindered their sorrow; a proud man is seldom a compassionate man; true humility will teach us to lament and bewail others' frailty. *Ye are puffed up, and have not mourned*; the original word, *to mourn*, seems to refer to a custom in the primitive time, when Christians put on solemnly mourning attire, and bewailed excommunicate persons as those that are dead. These Corinthians being puffed up with pride, were so far from their compassionate mourning over this incestuous person, that they rather rejoiced at it, and insulted over that party to whom this person belonged. So prone are persons to rejoice at the downfall of others, either by sin, or by affliction!

3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed; 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

As if the apostle had said, "Although I am absent from you in body, yet in mind and consent I am present with you, and also by my discerning spirit, by which I am enabled to discern things done at a distance; and accordingly by the authority and power given me by our Lord Jesus Christ, I have already determined, that when you are solemnly gathered together in the name of Christ, and have my spirit concurring with you, and the power of Christ confirming the sentence pronounced

by you, that you deliver this incestuous person unto Satan, by casting him out of the church, and leaving him to God's executioner to inflict destructive punishment on his body, to bring him to repentance for the saving of his soul." Here note, 1. The censure and sentence pronounced: excommunication, which consisteth of two parts, (1) Privative, in a separation from the communion of saints. (2) Positive, which is here expressed by delivering unto Satan, who had then a power over the excommunicated person's body to torment it with diseases; which power though now ceased, yet the Christian church has at this day a power to exclude enormous offenders from the ordinary means of grace and salvation, and to expose them to the malice and temptations of their grand adversary the devil, by depriving them of church communion, which is a more dreadful punishment than persons are sensible of. Note, 2. The person inflicting this censure, St. Paul, *I have judged already*. He pronounced it judicially, and requires the Corinthians to denounce it solemnly. *I have judged already*; implying that he did not determine rashly and suddenly, but advisedly, as became a judge. And mark, they must denounce solemnly what he had determined judicially, and this in the face of the whole church, *when ye are gathered together*; that is, in the presence of the chief pastor, and all his flock at Corinth. A public crime must have a public doom, that others may hear and fear: yet remark, the congregation or church were witnesses of the censure, but they did not judge and determine it: the apostle did that. The power of the keys is in the hand of the church only, *quoad christum* not *quoad seipsum*: that the church may have the benefit of them, not the managing of them, for that is committed to the pastors only, as appears, *Matt. xvi. John xx.* Note, 3. The solemn and awful manner in which the censure and excommunication was and ought to be pronounced, *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*; that is, having first, in a solemn manner, called upon the Lord Jesus Christ for his direction and benediction; or, in the name of our Lord Jesus, that is, according to the command of Christ, by the power and authority of Christ, and with an eye to the glory of Christ; this should be the manner, and these should be the ends, in denouncing church censures: and then Christ will be at the consistory, and his co-operation will make good the censure, as his commission was our warrant to pronounce it; and then the penitent may and ought to dread the sentence, as

coming out of Christ's own mouth, and to be inflicted by Christ's own hand. Note, 4. The miserable case and state which the person that is duly excommunicated is in: he is then delivered unto Satan, as God's executioner, to inflict severe punishments on the person's body, now cast out of God's special protection, deprived of the church's communion, and exposed to the temptations and snares of our grand adversary, Satan. St. Austin in his time declared, that it was then thought *gravius quam gladio feriri*, much more grievous to be excommunicated than to be beheaded. But, Lord! where are the persons at this day, who tremble when their sins have brought them into this miserable case and state? Note, 5. That persons ought not to be in this severe and solemn manner proceeded against, but for notorious, scandalous sins. To denounce this awful censure upon every slight and trivial occasion, is to prostitute one of the most venerable ordinances of Christ to contempt and scorn. Note, 6. The great and special end for which the ordinance of excommunication was instituted by Christ in his church, and executed by his apostles; namely, to recover the fallen person by repentance, and to be a warning to others. The reforming, and not the ruining of men, was the intention of this ordinance: the censure is not mortal, but medicinal. It is, 1. For the destruction of the flesh, so lasciviant in him; for the mortifying his lusts, by afflicting him with grief and sorrow. 2. For the saving of his spirit, that is, his soul, that this may be recovered out of the snare of the devil. Lastly, The time is expressed, when the penitent person shall find the benefit of this painful ordinance; namely, *in the day of the Lord Jesus*: not but that a penitent in this life shall find some ease in his conscience, and satisfaction in his spirit: but the full benefit of ecclesiastical censure is reserved to the day of the Lord, the day of judgment: then will Christ manifest to the church triumphant the good effect of the power of the keys, which he hath committed to his ministers. to be exercised publicly in the church militant; he will then reveal how all stand bound in heaven, whom his church never loosed on earth; and all whom his church hath loosed on earth, shall then appear to be loosed in heaven.

6 Your glorifying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.—

As if the apostle had said, "You Corinthians are prone to pride yourselves, in the numbers of wise and wealthy men that are found among you; you glory that Corinth is the eye of Greece, and Greece the eye of the world; but what do you glory in this for? When you have such a scandalous person among you, (the incestuous man,) who is a blot and a blemish to your whole society, know ye not that as a little leaven leaveneth and soureth the whole lump; so such a member continued among you, will defile the whole body or society of Christians with you! Therefore *purge out this old leaven*, (cast this scandalous person out of your communion,) *that ye may be a new lump* (your whole church an holy society) *as ye are unleavened*; that is, forasmuch as ye are by your profession of Christianity obliged to be unleavened, that is, separated from sin and sinners." Learn hence, 1. That all sin in general, but the sin of uncleanness in particular, is as leaven in regard of its spreading and diffusive nature: *old leaven* it is here called, because the Corinthians had been long infamous for this sin of uncleanness, even to a proverb. Observe next, That the apostle having used this similitude of leaven, he pursues it in allusion to the Jewish custom before the celebration of the passover, who were to cast all leaven out of their houses with detestation and cursing, upon penalty of being cut off from the congregation of Israel. Thus the holy profession of Christianity obliges every one of us to cut off every notorious sinner from our society, every lust from our hearts, every member of the old Adam, that we may be a new lump, answering our holy and heavenly calling.

—For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Observe here, The apostle's reason why the old leaven of uncleanness and malicious wickedness should be put away by us; namely, because *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*. We should therefore be as careful to put away sinful lusts out of our hearts, as the Jews were to cast the material leaven out of their houses. Learn hence, 1. That Christ is our passover, or paschal lamb, in allusion to which he is often called a *lamb* in the New Testament. We do not find him expressed in the New Testament by the name of any other animals which typified him, but only this of a lamb, this being more significant of his

innocency and sufficiency than any other. *St. John* i. 29. he is called God's lamb; here he is called our passover or paschal lamb; God's in regard of the author, ours in regard to the end; God's in regard of designation, ours in regard of acceptance. Learn, 2. That Christ is our sacrifice. A sacrifice was necessary for a sinful creature, to atone divine displeasure: a sacrifice for sin must be pure and sinless; no such sacrifice could be found but the eternal Son of God; for whatever any creature could do or suffer, had been but a debt or duty, and that could never have made compensation or satisfaction for a debt of rebellion. Learn, 3. That Christ was a sacrifice for us, not for himself; for being perfectly sinless, he needed no sacrifice. Now the notion of all sacrifices, both among Jews and heathens, was this, That they were substituted in the room and place of the offender, to appease an offended deity, and exempt the guilty person from punishment. Accordingly our sins were imputed to Christ, and he died under the imputed guilt of them, as a reputed sinner; for we cannot conceive how divine justice should inflict the punishment upon Christ, had it not first considered him under guilt. The weight of all our sin was laid upon his innocent shoulders: our guilt became his, by a voluntary susception of the punishment, and consequently the sufferings of this sacrifice are imputed to us. He took our sins upon himself, as if he had actually sinned; and gave us the benefit of his sufferings, as if we had actually suffered and satisfied. Observe next, The inference drawn by the apostle from Christ's dying a sacrifice for us: *Therefore let us keep the feast*; not an anniversary, or yearly, but a daily feast, even all the days of our Christian life; let the whole of our lives be as the Jewish feast of passover was, free from leaven, from the leaven of malice and wickedness, and full of sincerity and uprightness both towards God and man. Learn hence, The duty of every particular and individual Christian; seeing Christ has died as a sacrifice for his sin, his duty is to live unto Christ, by living up to the rule which Christ has given him, abhorring all malice, abandoning all wickedness, acting all that sincerity towards God, and exercising that truth and uprightness towards man, which will be an ornament to our profession whilst we are upon earth, and will bring us at length to the fruition of God in heaven.

9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators. 10 Yet

not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

Here our apostle tells them, that he had written to them in this, or some other epistle, before he was fully acquainted with their affairs, not to company with fornicators; that is, to shun all intimacy and familiarity with infidels: but he did not mean or intend that they should have no converse or commerce with them, because they lived among unbelievers, and could not go out of the world. But now since he heard of the miscarriage of this incestuous person, who was certainly a Christian, and probably a doctor or teacher among them, he warns them to avoid all brotherly intimacy and familiarity with scandalous Christians, lest the church be thought to favour such: *With such an one, says he, no, not to eat*; admit not such to your own table, much less to Christ's. Learn from hence, 1. That all unnecessary society, and intimate familiarity with scandalous professors, ought to be avoided, that religion may not be thought to favour them, and the church may not suffer by them. Learn, 2. That as it ought to be the church's care to purge out such, and separate them from her communion; so is it every private Christian's duty to avoid that familiarity with them which is in their power, even that which lieth in friendly eating with them. Learn, 3. If civil eating with scandalous professors, of religion be forbidden at our own table, much less ought any church to permit and suffer them a religious eating at the Lord's table, which was never spread for such guests.

12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

As if the apostle had said, "My jurisdiction extendeth not to the heathens, I have nothing to do to judge and censure them that are without the church: but such as are within the pale of the church, your own members, who own your jurisdiction,

these you have an undoubted right and power to judge, leaving the other to the judgment of God: therefore I advise, nay, charge you, to *put away from yourselves that wicked and incestuous person*, by excommunicating and banishing him from your communion." As banishment is a civil excommunication, so excommunication is a spiritual banishment: magistrates must drive malefactors out of civil societies, and church officers must expel enormous offenders out of their religious societies; for they who are unfit for civil converse, are much more unfit for spiritual communion. The last words, *Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person*, help us clearly to understand the former precept, ver. 7. *Purge out the old leaven, &c.* that they are not in their first and proper sense to be interpreted of particular persons purging out their lusts, and mortifying their corruptions, though that be a very necessary duty; but it is to be understood of every Christian church's duty to purge out from among them all flagitious and enormous offenders.

*Cuncta prius tentanda, sed immedicabile vulnus
Enne recidendum est, ne pars sincera trahatur.*

CHAP. VI.

The holy apostle having in the former chapter taxed the Corinthians for their great negligence in not judging the incestuous person in a case ecclesiastical; in this chapter he blames them for their too great forwardness in going to judgment in a matter civil and political.

These Corinthians, who were converted by the apostle to the Christian faith, went to law with and impleaded one another before heathen judges: whereas they ought to have submitted their differences to be heard before, and decided by, the saints, that is, their brethren and fellow-Christians.

Now this mighty scandal to Christianity our apostle upbraids them with, and sharply reproves them for, in this chapter; in which he thus bespeaks them:

DARE any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life.

Observe here, 1. That it was not simply and absolutely their going to law which the apostle condemns, but their impleading one another at pagan tribunals, and before heathen judges; *the law is good, if used lawfully*; but the best thing may be abused; so is oft the law itself. Most evident it is,

that the apostle, who was offended at their using the law before infidels, allows it before Christians, as the first verse implies. Observe, 2. The title given to the Corinthian converts: they are all called *saints*, because they were all so by outward profession, and many of them so by inward sanctification. Whence learn, (1.) That all those who take upon them the profession of Christianity, are obliged to be saints, and may be so called, being such by visible profession. (2.) That the true and real Christian is a true and real saint: his heart is inwardly renewed and sanctified, his life thoroughly reformed and changed. Observe, 3. The several errors enumerated by our apostle in the Corinthians, going to law, (1.) In regard of the adversary, *Brother goeth to law with brother*; not infidel with infidel, nor infidel with Christian; but Christian with Christian, brother with brother: which seems both unnatural and unchristian. (2.) In regard of the judges chosen to decide and umpire their controversies; they were infidels and unbelievers, not saints. If brother will go to law with brother, let them make choice of Christian judges; but for Christians to refuse Christians, and to choose to be judged by infidels, was highly scandalous! What will heathens say, when Christians are together by the ears, and infidels live in unity. Observe, 4. The great argument used by the apostle to dissuade them from this practice; he argues *a maiore ad minus*, from the greater to the less. The saints shall judge the world, the wicked world; yea, the apostate angels in another world: are they not fit then to judge and determine trivial matters between man and man, between one Christian and another, here in this world? Learn hence, That the saints, as assessors with Christ, and approvers of his righteous judgment, shall at the great day judge the wicked world, and the apostate angels. O ye wicked world! you that now revile and scorn, that injure and wrong the saints and servants of the most high God, know, that they shall one day be your judges. O ye saints! who shall be judges of the world, know that your time of judging in this world is not yet; do not anticipate your work, nor antedate your commission: *Judge nothing before the time, till the Lord comes.*

4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be

able to judge between his brethren?

6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather *suffer yourselves* to be defrauded? 8 Nay, ye do wrong and defraud, and that *your* brethren.

It must be still observed, that the apostle, doth not go about to abolish the use of secular judgments, or condemn going to law; but only reprove the abuses that were found among them therein. *Brother going to law with brother*; that is, one Christian with another: and this not before a Christian but an heathen magistrate; by means whereof the Gentiles became acquainted with the covetousness, ambition, and revenge, which was among Christians, to the dishonour of God, and to the discredit of the gospel. More particularly, the apostle farther censures and reprove them, first, for going to law about trifles and small matters; *Are ye unworthy to judge the least matters?* Should Christians thus implead one another before infidels for mere trifles? It seems it has been an ancient and too common fault, that every petty difference has pestered the tribunal. Secondly, for their impleading and persecuting one another; it was with heat and passion, with impatience and impetuous anger. Going to law is one of those duties which is difficultly managed without sin; it is an hard matter for a man to right his estate, and not wrong his soul. Thirdly, He reprove them, because they did not choose rather to put up with some wrongs, than right themselves by going to law? *Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* Teaching us, that something should not only be hazarded, but parted with, for peace sake. Peace is a jewel worth our buying at a dearer rate than most men are willing to give for it; and a peaceable Christian will put up with many injuries patiently, rather than use extremity, referring his cause to Him that judgeth righteously; who very often in this life repays us what we part with for peace sake twice over. *Blessed are the meek, they shall inherit the earth.* Fourthly, The apostle blames them for their precipitation and haste, in going to law one with another; the law should have been their last refuge after trial of all other means. First, they should have referred it to their brethren; if they could not end it, then the law was open. But instead of

this, as soon as any difference arose, they sent presently for a writ to the heathenish courts of judicature. Fifthly, He blames the ignorance which was found amongst them, that there was no wise person found with them, who could compromise and compose differences before they went too far; ver. 5. *I speak it to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man amongst you, that is able to judge between his brethren?* As if he had said, "What, will ye all stand and look on these unkind bickerings; and is there not one among you, that has so much skill as to quiet and compose them? I am really ashamed of it." Sixthly, He rebukes their slothfulness, together with their ignorance, that they were lazy as well as unskilful, and unwilling to interpose for the composing of their brethren's differences. A little pains timely taken by us, may prevent abundance of strife and dissension between contending brethren. These are the principal faults which the apostle condemns in these Corinthians going to law: it is not the action, or thing itself, but the circumstances attending it, and the mismanagement of it, that is here condemned; which being rectified, law is no doubt lawful, whatever some erroneous persons have affirmed to the contrary.

9 Know ye not, that the uprighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle's positive assertion, and categorical proposition, *That the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God*; where by unrighteousness, is meant injustice and injuriousness towards our neighbour, as appears by the context, which speaks of defrauding: unrighteousness will as certainly shut out of heaven, as ungodliness. Observe next, The large catalogue of sins which the apostle reckons up, that will shut out of heaven: uncleanness, idolatry, inordinate love of this world, drunkenness, &c. For the confirmation of his proposition, he proceedeth to the enumeration of the several sins destructive of salvation: which are not to be understood copulatively, but disjunctively: not as if he only who is guilty of all these shall miss of heaven, but he that lives in any one of these unrepented of; if he doth not forsake his wicked course of life, he shall never see the kingdom of God: whoever

allows and tolerates himself in any one sin, is certainly in a state of damnation. Lord, how many thousand vain hopes are laid in the dust, and how many thousand of impenitently wicked souls are sentenced to hell, by this one scripture! Observe lastly, The caution or cautionary direction given by St. Paul to the Corinthians, not to deceive themselves with a contrary expectation, (though one would think men could hardly be deceived in so plain a case,) as if their bare profession of Christianity would save them, whilst they allowed themselves to live in the practice of any of the aforementioned wickedness: *Be not deceived.* Learn thence, That men are very prone to deceive themselves in this, that though they live wickedly, yet they shall die happily, and go to heaven gloriously. They have such unlimited apprehensions of the pardoning grace and mercy of God, that they bound it not to faith, and repentance, and an holy life; never considering whether they are qualified subjects or no for that grace and mercy. God is a merciful God, says the wicked man, therefore I shall not go to hell; God is a merciful God, says the devil, therefore I hope to come out of hell. No, say you, that doth not follow, for God has decreed and declared the contrary. And has he not decreed and determined, has he not said and sworn, That the impenitent sinner shall never enter into his rest? Be not then deceived, oh sinner; whilst thou continuest unreformed, thou canst not inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Here we have another argument, which our apostle uses to dissuade them from all gross wickedness in general, and from such unchristian behaviour one towards another, as he had before reprov'd in particular: namely, that great and mighty change which had been wrought upon several of them by means of their conversion to the Christian religion, or the faith of Christ; *Such were some of you; but ye are now washed.* As if the apostle had said, "You are no longer swine, but sheep, and therefore must not wallow in the mire of sin as you formerly did." Note here, 1. The black and filthy condition of a sinner, before conversion; the apostle had reckoned up the vilest and worst of sins that could be mentioned, and then says, *Such were some of you.* The original word is in the neuter, not in the masculine gender; not *erōs*, such persons, but *tauta*, such sins; as emphatically

demonstrating their wickedness, that they were not so much *peccatores*, sinners, as *ipsa peccata*, the very sins themselves. Learn hence, That the converting grace of God is sometimes vouchsafed to the vilest and worst of men; and where it is vouchsafed, makes a very great and mighty change. Note, 2. The particular expressions by which this change is represented: *ye are washed*, sacramentally washed in baptism; *ye are sanctified*, purified in your hearts and natures by the sanctifying influences of divine grace; *ye are justified*, that is, acquitted from guilt, and approved as righteous. Note, 3. The means by which this change was wrought and effected; in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God. *In the name of our Lord Jesus*, that is, through the merits and for the mediation of the Lord Jesus, and by faith therein; *and by the Spirit of our God*, that is, through the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. 1. Here we have the defiling nature of sin supposed; all men by nature are polluted and defiled, and stand in need of washing. 2. Our Lord Jesus Christ will not disdain or refuse to justify by his blood, and sanctify by his Spirit, the greatest sinners, and the filthiest souls, that apply unto him, by faith, for pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace: *Such were you, but ye are washed.* 4. Though justification and sanctification are distinct and different in their nature, yet are they always inseparable in their subject: no person is justified but he that is sanctified: Christ justifies none by his blood, whom he doth not sanctify by his Spirit. Though justification and sanctification are not the same thing, yet are they always found in the same person: by the former there is a relative change in our condition; by the latter, a real change in our conversation.

12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them.—

Our apostle still proceeds in the reprehensory part of his epistle, and begins here to reprove the growing heresy of the Gnostics and Nicolaitans among them, who allowed the eating of things sacrificed to idols, and fornication, as things indifferent. The apostle grants, that all indifferent things are lawful, and may be used, first, when they are expedient, that is, when they may be used without hurting ourselves and others: and, secondly, when they do not get such a dominion over us, as to enslave

us to an intemperate and immoderate use of them; he instances particularly in meats, and grants that it is lawful to use any kind of meat, because God hath ordained it for the good of man's nature: meats are ordained for the belly, and the belly at present ordained for the reception of meats; but as God will destroy meats, so will he destroy the belly also, as to the use it now hath; for in the resurrection men shall neither hunger nor thirst any more. Learn hence, That Christianity doth not barely restrain us from the doing of what is unlawful, but from doing of what is inexpedient also: an action in itself lawful may by circumstances become sinful, and it is both wise and safe to forbear the use of our Christian liberty, when it becomes an occasion of offence unto our neighbour.

— Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

From this verse to the end of the chapter our apostle labours, by sundry arguments, to convince the Corinthians of the exceeding sinfulness of the sin of fornication; partly, because they reckon it amongst the number of indifferent things, and also because the Corinthians before their conversion to Christianity, were so notoriously addicted to this sin, that they consecrated a temple to Venus, at which a multitude of virgins prostituted themselves; for which reason St. Paul makes use of a six-fold argument here, to prevent the Corinthians' relapse into this sin of fornication after their conversion, which they had been so notoriously guilty of before conversion. The first argument is in the words before us, *Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.* As if he had said, "You put the body to a use for which it was never intended: the belly was made for meats, but the body was not made for fornication, but for the Lord, that is, for the Lord's use and service; and the Lord is for the body, that is, for the good and salvation of the body." Whence note, That such is the wonderful goodness of God towards us, his creatures, that look in whatsoever we are for him, he is for us; as our bodies are for the Lord's service as well as our souls, so the Lord is for the good of our bodies as well as our souls, and therefore our bodies ought to be employed in his glory for every thing: this is the apostle's first argument against fornication.

14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

Here a second argument against fornication is taken from the body's resurrection: Our bodies are to be raised, therefore not to be defiled; to be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body in heaven, therefore not to be defiled with lusts here on earth. As if he had said, "Were your bodies to be finally lost in the dust, then were it no great matter how you used them, or abused them: but as God hath raised up Christ's body, so he will raise up your body; and seeing your body is the garment which your soul is to wear to all eternity in heaven, keep it pure and undefiled here on earth."

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of an harlot? God forbid.

A third argument here follows: "Our bodies are the members of Christ, as well as our souls; that is, the union is made between Christ and us, consisting of soul and body both. Now, shall we dispose of our bodies, the members of Christ, to so base an use? Shall our bodies, which are joined to Christ, ever condescend to so base a conjunction, as that of being joined to an harlot? God forbid that such an indignity be done by us."

16 What, know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two (saith he) shall be one flesh. 17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

The sense is, "That as wedlock makes man and wife one body lawfully, so fornication makes the man and the harlot one body sinfully; all the difference is in the morality of the act, but the species or kind of act is the same: thus the fornicator and the harlot are one flesh; but he that is joined to the Lord, namely, by faith and love, hath a nearer and more noble union than that of flesh, for he is one spirit with Christ; not essentially and substantially one, but mystically and spiritually. Christ and the sincere believer are led and guided, actuated and influenced, by the same Spirit; therefore take heed what you do, for in making your bodies the members of an harlot, you dissolve the union betwixt Christ and them. Learn from hence, How closely and intimately believers are united unto Jesus Christ: they are nearer than one flesh; they are one spirit with him, they have both one Father, one house, one home, one heart, one interest, one acquaintance. Happy they who are thus joined to the Lord, for they are one spirit.

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body: but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

Flee fornication. Note, 1. The apostle's advice to escape fornication; and that is, to flee it, namely, by shunning all occasions of it, all temptations leading to it, all incentives and provocations of it, not suffering our eye to wander, or our thoughts to muse, much less to dwell, upon any unlawful or ensnaring object. *Flee fornication.* Note, 2. The argument our apostle uses to *flee fornication*; because other sins are without the body, but this against the body. *Quest.* But how is the apostle to be understood when he says, all other sins are without the body? *Ans.* Thus, though all other outward sins, as drunkenness, murder, theft, &c. have the body as an instrument for committing them; yet in this sin of uncleanness the body is not only the instrument, but the object also, for the unclean person doth not only sin with his body, but he sins against his body. Uncleanness leaves that blot and brand of ignominy and baseness upon the body which no other sin doth: degrading it from that excellent honour whereunto God advanced it in its natural condition, by making it the member of an harlot.

19 What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God,—

Here we have the apostle's fifth argument against fornication and uncleanness, and it runs thus: "Temples which are peculiarly consecrated unto God and his service, ought not to be profaned or polluted; but the bodies of Christians are the temples of God, the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, and therefore they ought to be kept pure and undefiled. *Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, as well as your souls!*" Our bodies are called temples of the Holy Ghost, because he hath sanctified them for himself, for his habitation, and for his service: from whence the divinity of the Holy Ghost may be strongly inferred, a temple always supposing some deity to dwell in it; the tabernacle and temple are God's habitation. Now if the Holy Ghost dwells in good men as a temple, he is truly and really God. In fine, since all Christians are become the temple of God, by virtue of his Holy Spirit sent into their hearts, consecrating their bodies to his sacred service, let us not desecrate or pollute this temple by defiling it with filthy lusts, but

make chastity the keeper of this sacred house, and suffer nothing that defileth to enter into it, lest that God who dwelleth in it, being offended, should desert his house thus defiled.

—And ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Here we have the sixth and last argument which the apostle makes use of to flee fornication: Our bodies are not our own, but God's; they are his by creation, his by preservation, his by purchase and redemption. We are bought out of our own hands, as well as out of the hand of divine justice; therefore we sacrilegiously rob and wrong God, when we alienate any part of his own from him, and glorify him not, whose we wholly are, by the faithful service both of our souls and bodies, which are his. Learn, 1. That Christians are not their own, but God's; not their own, and therefore not in their own power, not at their own disposal, not to live after their own will or by their own lusts, but according to the will and to the ends and uses of their principal Lord, whose they are. Learn, 2. That as Christians are not their own, so they must not act and live, and dispose of themselves, of their souls and bodies, as if they were their own, as if they had an original propriety, a plenary possession, and a full dominion over themselves: a Christian must not make his own reason a supreme rule, nor his own will his chief law, nor his own interest his ultimate end, for he was made neither by himself, nor made for himself. Learn, 3. That all of us are God's, and therefore we cannot without great sacrilege invade his right, and give that body to an harlot which is consecrated unto him. Learn, 4. That though we are all God's, yet we have alienated ourselves from God, and withdrawn ourselves from his disposal. Learn, 5. That being thus alienated from God, he has once more bought us, bought us with a price, a great and full price, the blood of his Son; and we are now God's own again by redemption and purchase. Learn, 6. That our bodies and spirits being thus the Lord's, we should glorify him both in our souls and bodies which are his; glorify him in our bodies by external purity and exemplary sanctity, glorify him in our spirits by internal purity of heart. Thus if we glorify him in our body, and in our spirits, in a way of obedience, he will at last fashion our vile bodies like unto his glorious body, and make our spirits as the spirits of just men made perfect, in that

great day, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

CHAP. VII.

Our apostle having finished the reprehensory part of this Epistle in the foregoing chapters, he comes in this chapter to resolve divers cases of conscience, about which the Corinthians had written to him, particularly concerning marriage: not about the lawfulness of marriage, for that was out of dispute, but about the expediency of it at that time, whether it were advisable in that afflicted state of the church.

NOW concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*

The first scruple or case of conscience which the Corinthians wrote to the apostle about was concerning marriage. Amongst many other wicked opinions, which the Gnostics, those ancient heretics, maintained, this was one, That marriage was from the devil. Our apostle elsewhere, *Heb. xiii. 4*, asserts marriage to be holy and honourable; here he determines first in general, that such as have the gift of continency, and can live chaste in a single state, do well; and in particular, that a single life at that time was most advisable, and most agreeable to the calamitous and afflicted state of the church; so that when the apostle says in this verse, *It is good for a man not to touch a woman*, his meaning is, it is more agreeable to the present necessity, more convenient in regard of the persecuted state of the church, as being a condition less disturbed with cares, and less troubled with distraction: for marriage plunges men into an excess of worldly cares, it multiplies their business, and usually their wants, and those wants are harder supplied than in a single life, and more difficulty borne; it is much easier to bear personal wants than family wants: with respect to all which, says the apostle, especially as the present state of the church stands, *it is good for a man not to touch a woman*: not that it is at any time simply unlawful, but at sometimes manifestly inexpedient.

2 Nevertheless, *to avoid* fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

As if the apostle had said, "Such are the inclinations of human nature, that every man cannot always do that which is most for his own quiet and ease, but men find the strength of lust and the power of concupiscence so strong in themselves, that marriage, which is God's ordinance for

avoiding fornication, and for the propagation of mankind, is of absolute necessity to some persons; therefore for avoiding fornication, and all sorts of uncleanness, (which was so common at Corinth) *let every man retain his own wife, and every woman her own husband.*" Here observe, 1. The apostle's expression: he says, *Quisque et quæque*, not *quidam et quædam*; let every man and every woman marry, not *some* men and *some* women only; he excepts none, neither priest nor nun, but every one is here permitted, yea, for avoiding fornication, commanded, to marry. Observe farther, How the apostle directs every man to have his own wife, and every woman her own husband: more than one is forbidden; and polygamy, or the sin of having either more wives or more husbands at a time than one, is here condemned. To bridle and restrain men's extravagant lusts, the wisdom of God has directed every man to enjoy his own wife, and every woman her own husband. Let the church of Rome consider how she will answer at the bar of God, for spitting in the face of this ordinance of God, for denying the lawfulness of marriage to her priests and nuns, when God has told her, *Heb. xiii. 4*, that *marriage is honourable in all, and that all unclean persons God will judge*; and such too often have their priests and nuns been one with another.

3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. **4** The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. **5** Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Observe here, 1. That matrimonial conversation, or the husband's and wife's performing towards each other all the duties of marriage which they promised, is an act of justice, which they owe to one another: this is intimated in the word *render*, and consequently to deny the same is injustice and fraud: *Defraud not one another*. Marriage takes away from persons that power which they had over themselves and their own bodies, and transfers it in some sort to the person they are married to. Yet observe, 2. That persons in a married state may, and in some cases ought, (namely, for religious ends and purposes,) by mutual

consent to abstain from a conjugal duty for some time: *Defraud not one another, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer.* Observe, 3. The apostle lays no obligation upon any single persons to take upon them a vow for a single life, nor doth he direct married persons to those perpetual divorces from the marriage-bed, which the papists practise, under pretence of religion: for the apostle admits of no perpetual separation between husband and wife, upon any pretence whatever: no, not that they may give themselves to prayer and fasting; but only permits it for a time, upon condition that they come together again. So far was this holy man from laying a snare upon the consciences of any persons, either in a single or married state.

6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. 7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. 8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. 9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

As if the apostle said, "Mistake me not, as if I imposed marriage upon all persons as a duty: no, but I declare it is permitted to all as a remedy against fornication; for so far am I from that, that I could wish all men were unmarried, even as I myself am, and that they had the gift of continence with myself; but God, who will have the world yet farther continued and increased, hath not given this gift to all, nor to all alike in the same measure. Therefore to the unmarried I say, that so many are the advantages of a single life, that if they can abide chaste and single, as I do, it will be many ways for their advantage: but if they cannot, let them use God's remedy, which is marriage; for it is better to marry, than to burn in lust, to be perpetually assailed with unclean desires, and subject to the ravings and insults of lust." Learn hence, 1. That marrying or not marrying is according to several circumstances, matter of advice and counsel, but neither of them absolutely of precept. 2. That second marriages are not only lawful, but an incumbent duty, if persons cannot contain themselves within the bounds and rules of chastity: *To the widows I say, if they cannot contain, let them marry.*

10 And unto the married I com-

mand, *yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: 11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife.*

As if the apostle had said, Although it be no sin to marry, yet it is a sin to depart when married; herein I lay the authority of God's command upon you, that you agree together, and that no difference which may arise between you cause you to separate and live asunder. But to marry upon departure, is a double sin. Therefore if any disagreements and discontents between husband and wife cause you to live asunder for a time, think not either of you of marrying to another person; but be reconciled to each other, and live together in love, as it becometh persons professing godliness. A civil war in families is fatal, as well as in the commonwealth. Domestic contentions, especially betwixt husband and wife, are dangerous and destructive of love and peace. If at any time they arise to that height as to cause a separation betwixt them two who are one flesh, yet nothing of that nature can warrant their divorce; nothing but death or adultery can untie the marriage knot, and release them from their obligation to each other.

12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. 13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

1. Here we have another case of conscience put by the Corinthians to the apostle; namely, whether such husbands as had *heathen* and *infidel* wives might put them away? And whether such wives as had *infidel* husbands, might not, and ought not, to depart from them? The apostle resolves the case, That they ought, according to the intent and end of marriage, to cohabit and dwell together: and he assigns the reason for it, because the unbelieving or *infidel* wife is sanctified to the believing or Christian husband. How sanctified? Not in her nature, but in her use; so that they might lawfully cohabit and converse together, being by marriage made one flesh

with him or her that is holy. "And for our children," says he, "they are not seminally unclean, like the children of Heathens, but federally holy." *How are they holy.* Not with an inherent, internal, personal holiness; for the holiest man's child is born in sin, and by nature a child of wrath; but with an external, relative, and federal holiness. They are not common and unclean, like the children of *infidels*, but fit to be partakers of the privileges of the church, to be admitted into covenant with God, as belonging to his holy people: *Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.* Observe, He doth not say, *Else were your children bastards*, but now are they legitimate, (as the enemies of infant baptism, those *duri infantum patres*, would make them speak;) but *else were they unclean*, that is, Heathen children not to be owned as a holy seed, and therefore not to be admitted into covenant with God as belonging to his holy people. If by holiness here the apostle means a matrimonial holiness, as the Anabaptists dream, then, according to their interpretation of the word *holy*, the apostle speaks neither pertinently nor truly. Not pertinently, 1. For then the answer had been nothing to the purpose. The case put was concerning husbands and wives, not concerning men and whores; and the question propounded by the Corinthians, was not, whether a believing husband, and an unbelieving wife, were lawful man and wife together? nobody questioned that: but, whether the Christian husband might put away his *heathen* wife? The apostle answers, he ought not, if she were willing to dwell with him, for she is sanctified to him; not sanctified in respect of her personal condition, but in respect of her conjugal relation, otherwise their children would be looked upon as unclean, like the children of heathens: but now are they holy, that is, to be accounted visible saints, and as such to be admitted to church-privileges. 2. According to this interpretation of the word *holy*, the apostle had not spoken truly: for the children of heathens born in lawful wedlock, are no more bastards than the children of Christians; for their parents' marriage frees them from the charge of illegitimacy as well as others. Add to this, that in all the New Testament, though the word *holy* be used above five hundred times, yet it never once signifies legitimacy, but is always used for a state of separation to God. Therefore, to make it signify so here, is a bold practising upon scripture, a racking and wresting of the word of God, to maintain a private opinion, to make the text speak what they would have, and not what the apostle intends.

But the argument for infant baptism from this text runs thus: "If the holy seed among the Jews were therefore to be circumcised and made federally holy, by receiving the sign of the covenant, and being admitted into the number of God's holy people, because they were seminally holy; *for the root being holy, the branches were also holy*: then by like reason the holy seed of Christians ought to be admitted to baptism, and receive the sign of the Christian covenant, the laver of regeneration, and so be entered into the society of the Christian church."

15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God hath called us to peace. 16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save *thy* wife? 17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

Here another doubt is resolved by the apostle, in case the unbelieving party, either husband or wife, depart, that is, refuse to cohabit and dwell with their believing yoke-fellow, and so make void, as much as in him or her lieth, the marriage-bond, out of hatred to the faith. In that case, if they will go, let them; you are not bound to leave your family to follow them. However, let every Christian husband or wife omit nothing, but endeavour in every thing to the utmost, to oblige and win, to incline and engage, their unbelieving yoke-fellows to live quietly with them: for God hath called us to peace; and therefore we must give no occasion of quarrel with, or separation from, so near a relation. And besides, by the peaceable dwelling together, there is hope of, and a fair opportunity for, the gaining and bringing over the unbeliever to the faith of Christ, and of being the instrument of his or her salvation. But however that may be, let every Christian discharge his duty in every relation in which God has set him. This order I appoint in all churches to Christianity, knowing it to be agreeable to the mind of God, "That no Christian could pretend his profession of religion to excuse him from the duties of any relation."

18 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcised.

ion? let him not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

Here the apostle proceeds to exhort the Corinthians to be content with the lot and condition which God had distributed unto them, and to frame themselves to walk christianly in it. Particularly he shows, That if any person amongst them were a native Jew, and so circumcised, and afterwards converted to Christianity, he should neither trouble himself to get off that mark from his flesh, nor affect the state of him who, being a Gentile, had never been circumcised. On the other side, if any of them were native Gentiles, and never circumcised, but now converted to Christianity, let him not affect the state of one who was a native Jew, and circumcised: *For circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing*; that is, nothing now available to salvation, nothing that renders persons more or less acceptable in the sight of God; but the keeping of the commandments of God, this is all in all. For God regards not men's outward conditions, but obedience to his commands. Christianity consists not in a warm zeal, either for or against outward ceremonies, but in positive holiness, and a strict conformity to divine precepts.

20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. 21 Art thou called *being* a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. 22 For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ's servant. 23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. 24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

The apostle seems to intimate from these words, that some persons converted to Christianity in the primitive times, apprehended that thereupon they must leave their worldly callings and employments, as if they were snares to them, or unnecessary diversions from better things. No, says the apostle, *Let every one in his calling, wherein he is called, therein abide with God*; that is, look in what honest, civil calling they were found when they became Christians, let them keep to that calling still. For God doth not call us from our worldly employments and business, but calls us to

be holy in them; nor doth our serving God any whit acquit or discharge us from serving one another. But particularly it was the opinion of some servants converted to Christianity, that their spiritual freedom by Christ exempted them from all civil service to their masters. The apostle therefore tells them they are indeed freed by Christ, from sinful slavery, but not from civil servitude and subjection; from Jewish bondage, but not from Christian obedience. Learn hence, That Christianity doth not free men from any civil obligations which before they lay under. Our advantages by Christ are spiritual, and not secular; no man's outward condition is changed by his becoming a Christian; though he be now the Lord's freeman, yet he is a servant still, if he was so before; nay, their Christianity doth not exempt them from their secular relation to their heathen and infidel masters. A service to man doth not exempt us from, nor is inconsistent with, the service of God; so our spiritual calling doth not make void our civil; *Therefore let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.*

25 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. 26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress: *I say, that it is good for a man so to be.* 27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. 28 But and if thou marry thou hast not sinned: and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

The next case, which our apostle comes to resolve, is concerning virgins; whether they, being at their own disposal, should marry or keep themselves single? He tells them, first, that he had no special command whereby the state of virginity was either enjoined or prohibited, but he would faithfully give his advice according to the best of his judgment. And this he doth in two particulars: First, That by reason of the present distress, and danger of persecution, which threatened the church, it was most convenient, that such as were single should continue so, if it might lawfully be done. Yet, secondly, He declares, that if they marry, they do not sin; only they will be exposed to more troubles as the church's troubles so in-

crease. Here note, 1. That the apostle pronounces marriage lawful in all persons of both sexes, and not sinful at any time, or in any state or condition whatsoever. Note, 2. That he signifies to all persons, That the troubles of a married life are more than those which attend a single state: *Such shall have trouble in the flesh.* Marriage plunges men into an excess of worldly cares; it multiplies their business, and usually their wants; and their wants are far harder borne than in a single life. Note, 3. That besides the ordinary inconveniences of a married life, which all persons are to expect, such as enter the married condition, when the church is under persecution must prepare to meet with more than ordinary troubles. *Such*, that is, in those times of persecution, *shall have trouble*, that is, more trouble *in the flesh.* But I spare you; that is, "I forbear to speak any more of that matter, lest I should seem to dissuade you from marriage, which is the ordinance of God, more than is fit, and be thought by any to lay the yoke of celibacy, or a single life, upon you. I only tell you, that when Christians are under persecution and distress, it is much more for their ease and quiet to be single, than to have a wife and children to care for in poverty or flight."

29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; 30 And those that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; 31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.

As if he had said, "Let all persons, both married and unmarried, consider that the time of this life is short and passing; it is but a point of time we have to live, and shortly it will not be a pin to choose whether we had wives or not, or children or not; but before the expected fruits or the comforts be ripe, we ourselves may be rotten. It is therefore true spiritual wisdom to look upon these things now, as they will be shortly; to be very moderate in the enjoyment of them, not to be too much affected when we have them, or too much afflicted when we want them." Observe here, 1. The apostle's proposition: *The time is short.* This is true in all the notions of it. Take it first for the whole duration of this world, from the day of its creation

to the hour of its dissolution; compare it with what succeeds it, eternity; and it is very short, but a moment. Secondly, Take time for the whole duration of any one man's life, so 'tis shorter; so short, that it is nothing. Thirdly, Take time for the special season, either of doing or enjoying good in this life, so 'tis shortest of all. Observe, 2. The inference which the apostle draws from this proposition: therefore *let them that have wives, be as if they had none, &c.* Learn thence, That the consideration of the great shortness of time, and the uncertainty of human life, should keep our hearts in a great deal of moderation towards the best and sweetest of our outward comforts and enjoyments: That we neither love inordinately any mercy when we enjoy it, nor mourn immoderately for any contentment when we come to be deprived of it. *They that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not.* Observe, 3. The advice which the apostle gives to such as have great possessions and revenues in this world. (1.) To take heed that though they possess these things, that they be not possessed by them. (2.) That they so use them as not to abuse them, nor be abused by them. There is much evil in the world; yet we may, we must use it, and it will be our wisdom to make a good use of this world while we are in it; otherwise we neither answer the end of God in sending us into the world, nor the design of God in trusting us with the good things of this world. Observe, 4. The reason assigned why we should use the world in the aforementioned manner: because the *fashion of this world passeth away.* Here the apostle compares the things of this world to a scene which is presently changed, and vanisheth almost as soon as it appears. As fashions in this world alter, so doth the fashion of this world alter every day. There is a world to come, the fashion whereof shall never pass away; but the fashion or scheme of this world passeth away continually. This world is like a stage, persons interchangeably act their parts upon it, but they soon disappear, and the stage itself ere long will be pulled down; *The fashion of this world passeth away.* Thence learn, That this consideration, that all the comforts and conveniences of this life are fading and passing away from us, should be a strong motive and inducement to us not to set our hearts upon them.

32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to

the Lord, how he may please the Lord: 33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please *his* wife. 34 There is difference *also* between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit; but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please *her* husband. 35 And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

Here our apostle subjoins another reason why a single life is to be preferred before a married life; namely, because single persons are comparatively more free from cares and distractions, and have commonly more time and leisure to attend upon the Lord in religious duties. For the unmarried man has but one care upon him, namely, how he may serve and please God; but the married man has another care upon him, to wit, how he may oblige and please his wife. In like manner, a married woman is encumbered with household affairs, disturbed with domestic affairs, and concerned in lawful things to please her husband; and consequently has neither so much time nor freedom for holy exercises. But the virgin that has no family to care for, no husband to seek to please, has more leisure to attend upon God in his holy duties and religious exercises; therefore he advises them to choose that state of life in which they may *attend upon the Lord without distraction*. Learn hence, 1. That a married condition is certainly and necessarily attended with many diversions and distractions, from which a single life is free. Learn, 2. That persons in a conjugal relation may and ought to seek the obliging and pleasing one another with their utmost endeavours, without violating their duty to Almighty God. Learn, 3. That persons in a single state have great advantages (may they improve them!) of serving God above others, in regard of their freedom from domestic cares, troubles, and temptations; they have time and leisure for pious performances, if the heart be disposed for them. Learn, 4. That it is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour, of all persons, both married and unmarried, not only to serve God in religious duties, but to attend upon him in them, as much as may be, without

distraction. Distractions are the wanderings of the heart, mind, and thoughts, from God in religious duties. The nature of God requires, that we watch and strive against them; his majesty and greatness, his purity and holiness, his omniscience and all-seeing eye upon us, and within us, do oblige us to this careful endeavour; and the nature of his worship calls for it, which is a reasonable service, and a spiritual service; and the nature of distractions should make us dread them. They divide the heart, they deaden the duty, contract guilt, and provoke displeasure. Lord, help us, in all the services we perform unto thee, to attend upon them without distraction!

36 But if any man think that he becometh himself uncomely towards his virgin, if she pass the flower of *her* age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. 37 Nevertheless he that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. 38 So then, he that giveth *her* in marriage doeth well: but he that giveth *her* not in marriage doeth better.

The next case, which our apostle speaks to, is concerning virgins, who are under the power of others, (and not at their own disposal,) as parents and guardians, namely, whether it be best and most advisable for them to dispose of their virgins in marriage or not? The apostle answers, that in this case particular respect must be had to particular circumstances; as, namely, if she be of marriageable years, and beyond them: if she has inclination to, and be desirous of, marriage, then he advises that she be so disposed; but if a parent be fully satisfied in his own mind that he wrongs not his daughter in declining to marry her, if he has a perfect freedom in his own will, and his will is not contradicted by his daughter's desire, he doth well, yea, he doth best, not to marry her; best, with respect to the distressed condition of the church, best, with respect to the troubles of the world, which she will be the more free from; and best, with respect to the young woman's liberty and freedom for the service of God, and the exercises of religion. Learn hence, That although children are to be disposed of in marriage by their parents, yet parents have no such absolute power over their

children, as to hinder them from marriage, or to compel them to it. To do either is very sinful, very unnatural.

39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. 40 But she is happier, if she so abide, after my judgment: And I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

The apostle concludes the chapter with a resolution of the case of conscience; namely, whether second marriages of widows were lawful or not? He answers, They were. After the first husband was dead, the widow might marry again, provided that she married in the Lord: that is, with a believer, not an infidel; with one of the same faith with herself. It is very dangerous and sinful for persons professing the true faith of Christ to match with idolaters. There is far greater ground of fear that they will pervert you, than there is ground of hope that you shall convert them. But though the apostle asserts it lawful for widows to marry again, yet he declares, that in regard of the present danger which the church was in of persecution, they would be more happy in their widowhood. So that the determination of the apostle, as to the case of marriage and a single life, is concluded thus: "That ordinarily, where there is no necessity, a single life is more for a person's peace, more free from distractions in God's service, and therefore best."

CHAP. VIII.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing chapter, resolved several cases of conscience concerning marriage; in this chapter he resolves that grand case touching the lawfulness of eating things offered to idols. The occasion of which scruple was this: The Heathens used to sacrifice to their idols oxen, sheep, and other cattle, and to feast upon their sacrifices. Part of the oxen or sheep the priest burnt upon the altar, as a sacrifice to the idol, and the other part he either took to himself, and made a feast in the idol's temple, and invited his friends to it; or else the priest restored it to the offerer, who carried it home, and either feasted his neighbours with it, or else carried it into the market, and sold it in the shambles as other meat. Now the question which the Corinthians put to the apostle to resolve, was this, Whether Christians, if invited to these feasts, might go and eat of these meats, either in the idol temples or in the pagan houses, or might buy and eat of any such meat if it were sold in the shambles? A resolution of which question we have in this and the tenth chapter. In which the apostle thus bespeaks them:

NOW, as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all

have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

It was the opinion of the Gnostics and Nicolaitans, those early erroneous persons in the apostle's days, that from the knowledge they had of their Christian liberty, they might either be present in the idol temples, or eat of the idol sacrifices, as they pleased. The apostle here tells them, that he knew many of them had a good degree of knowledge, but desires that they might not be puffed up with it, but that their knowledge may be accompanied with charity, which respects the edification of others; and puts men upon considering not only what is lawful to be done in itself, and with respect to ourselves, but what is expedient or inexpedient in relation unto others. True love, or Christian charity, will put us upon consulting the good of our neighbours' souls, as well as our own; and will not suffer us to do that thing which may offend our weak brother, that is, lay a stumbling-block before him, to tempt him into sin. *Knowledge puffeth up*: this is to be understood of a notional, literal, and speculative knowledge only; not of a spiritual, practical, and experimental knowledge. The more a gracious man knows, the more humble he is, because his knowledge shows him his own vileness and emptiness: but the more a carnal man knows, the more proud he is, because he knoweth not himself: his knowledge is not only a temptation to pride, but the very matter of his pride. Such knowledge doth not build up, but puff up: whereas *charity edifieth*; that is, applies itself to the instruction of others, and accommodates itself to the edification of others; and considers not only what may lawfully be done, but what is fit and expedient to be done; as in the case here before us, eating things offered to idols.

2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

That is, "if a man have ever so much knowledge, yet if it be not accompanied with charity and humility, if he improve not his knowledge to the glory of God, and the good of others, he knows nothing to any saving purpose, as he ought to know." Learn, That Christians should by no means content themselves with an empty speculative knowledge, but labour to know as they ought to know. Observe farther, The apostle says, *He that thinketh that he knoweth any thing*, that is, he that is conceited of his own knowledge, that thinks of it with insolency and pride, and speaks of it with

affestation and vain-glory; he who is thus conceited of his own knowledge, knows not himself, yea, he knows nothing as he ought to know. Learn hence, That it becomes us to have very humble thoughts of ourselves, and of our own knowledge, how much sower we really know: that man's wisdom is but conceit, who is only wise in his own conceit.

3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

Observe, The apostle doth not say, if any man know God; but, if any man love God, the same is known; that is, allowed, accepted, and approved of him. A man may know much of God in this world, and yet God may be ashamed to know him in another world; but the soul that sincerely loves God, is certainly beloved of him, and shall be owned and acknowledged by him. Now, true love to our neighbour is a good evidence of our sincere love to God; and if we love our neighbour truly, we dare not scandalize our neighbour sinfully, nor offend our Christian brethren. Only here we must take notice, that by offending the weak, is not meant displeasing them; but by offending them, is meant laying a stumbling-block before them, which may occasion their falling into sin.

4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

One argument which the Gnostics used to prove the lawfulness of eating things offered unto idols was this, That an idol was nothing in the world. But how nothing? It was not materially nothing, for it was wood or stone: but formally it was nothing, it was nothing of God's creation, nothing that the idolater took it to be, there was nothing of a deity in it, and nothing of a deity could be represented by it: an idol is the vainest thing in the world, it is a mere vanity, a perfect nothing, (called therefore the *vanities* of the Gentiles,) it is of no worth or value, it has no power or virtue. Some observe, That the same Hebrew word signifies both an idol, and sorrow, and labour; partly because idols are made and formed with much labour and great exactness; the wood or stone, figuratively speaking, is put to pain; you must cut it and carve it to make an idol or statue of it; partly because idols are served and worshipped with much pain and labour. False worship is more painful than true: the service of the true God is

an holy and honourable service, a noble and ingenuous service, an easy and delightful service; but the service of idols is slavish, a toil rather than worship. Idols are troublesome both in making and worshipping, and after all the bustle made about them, an idol is nothing in the world, because there is no God but one.

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many,) 6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Here the apostle tells them, that although the heathen idolaters acknowledged a plurality of gods, some in heaven, as the sun, moon, and stars; some on earth, as men and beasts, they having their celestial and terrestrial gods and lords; but these were only called gods, that is, gods in name, not in nature, not in reality. Yet, says he, we Christians do own and acknowledge but one living and true God, one in nature, not one in person, to whom all our prayers must be directed; and one Mediator, by whom all our prayers are to be offered: *To us there is but one God, the Father.* This text the Arians, Socinians, and Unitarians, exceedingly boast of, as if it expressly confined the Deity to the Father, as distinct from Christ and the Holy Ghost. Thus they argue:—He who says there is one emperor, to wit, Cesar, says in effect there is no other emperor but Cesar: so when St. Paul saith, there is one God the Father, he doth (say they) in effect declare that there is no other God besides the Father." To this the orthodox answer, 1. "That God the Father is often put in scripture for the whole deity, comprehending the three persons; he being *Fons Deitatis*, and *Fundamentum Trinitatis*, as the schoolmen speak. So that the application of the word God here unto the Father, doth not exclude the Son from being God, but only from being the Fountain of the Deity, as the Father is. In *Rev. i. 17*, Christ says, I am *Alpha* and *Omega*, the first and the last. Will any conclude thence, that God the Father is not *Alpha* and *Omega*? Is not he the first and the last, as well as Christ? Again, We call our Lord Jesus the only Saviour: do we therefore exclude God the Father from being a Saviour? Is he not styled the Saviour of all men? 1 *Tim. iv. 10*. Again, God the Father is called the Creator of all things: yet it is asserted that all things

were created by Christ, the Word, John i.

2. In short, we assert as well as they, the unity of the Godhead, and that Christ is not another God, but only another person from the Father. *We answer*, 2. Their own argument may be thus retorted upon themselves: As the apostle says here, there is but one God the Father, so he adds in the next words, there is but one Lord Jesus Christ. Now if the saying that there is but one God, doth exclude Christ from being God, then the saying that there is but one Lord, doth exclude God the Father from being Lord; and if it be blasphemy to exclude God the Father from being Lord, it is no less to exclude Christ the Son from being God." *Know* then, that as Christians have in all ages of the church acknowledged one God only, even God the Father, so have they also owned that Jesus Christ was truly God, of the substance of the Father, God of God, very God of very God. The Lord keep us stedfast in this faith! seeing he that honoureth the Son honoureth the Father that hath sent him; but he that denieth the Son denieth the Father also.

7 Howbeit, *there is* not in every man that knowledge: for some, with conscience of the idol, unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

These words are brought in as a reason by the apostle why strong Christians should not eat meat offered unto idols, with respect to those that are weak; as if he had said, "Though many of you know that an idol is nothing, and that meat is neither sanctified nor polluted which is set before it, and therefore you can eat or not eat without any scruple as to yourselves, yet you should consider what is safest to be done with respect to others; for every man has not this knowledge that an idol is nothing, but some persons having a conceit of the idol's being something, eat what is offered to it as a thing offered to an idol; that is, not as common meat, but as a sacred banquet in honour of the idol; and so his conscience, being weak, that is, erroneous, is defiled." Learn hence, That an action which is lawful in respect of ourselves, may yet be a sin if done by us with respect to others; another, encouraged by our example, may do the same act, but not do it with the same intent, as in the case before us. The sight of one Christian's eating things offered unto idols, who knows that an idol is nothing in the world, may harden, embolden, and encourage

others to do the same, who really intend some honour by it to the idol: the outward action is the same, but the opinion and intention widely different.

8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better: neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. 9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak.

As if the apostle had said, "It is not the eating or not eating, barely considered, that makes a man either better or worse, more or less acceptable in the sight of God, but we must take great heed lest by our example others take occasion to worship the idol; you therefore ought not so to eat as to give occasion to the fall of your weak brother." Still the apostle holds forth this truth unto us, That such a man certainly sins, who uses his liberty so that it becomes a snare and a stumbling-block to his weak brother, by emboldening and encouraging him unto sin.

10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; 11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

The meaning of the apostle seems to be this: If any man with an erroneous conscience goes to these feasts, and there sees thee, (who he thinks has more knowledge than himself,) sit at meat in the idol's temple, will not his conscience be the more emboldened by thy example to eat things offered to idols in the honour of the idol, or, as thinking it no hurt, to worship the idol? And thus by occasion of thy knowledge, a weak brother is in danger of perishing, for whom Christ died. An indiscreet use of that liberty which our supposed knowledge teaches us to make use of, doth that, if we be not careful, which may be accounted a destroying of our weak brother, by causing him to fall into sin. By all which the apostle lets us know the obligation which lies upon every good Christian not to use his liberty to the prejudice of others' souls, by doing any action which may be let alone, but if done, may really become a snare to others.

12 But when ye sin so against the

brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

The apostle goes on to show, that such an use of our Christian liberty as doth embolden and encourage others to do that which is evil, is both an act of uncharitableness towards our brother, and also an act of sin against our Lord Jesus Christ, in betraying a soul to ruin as much as in us lieth, and hindering his salvation, for the saving of whom Christ died; wounding the members of his body, defeating the great end of his death, and destroying them whom he designed to save. Learn, 1. That Christ, in dying for the weakest believers, hath shown the highest degree of love imaginable unto them. Learn, 2. That such as will not abate or abridge themselves of their Christian liberty, when the use of it may probably be an occasion of sin, and the ruin of their brethren's souls, do at once wound their weak brethren, and sin against Christ.

13. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

A twofold sense and interpretation is given of these words. Some understand the apostle speaking thus: "If my eating meat offered to idols be a stumbling-block to any persons, and confirm them in their sinful practice, or be an occasion of sin unto them, I will certainly deny myself the use of that liberty which may prove of such dangerous consequence to my fellow-Christians." Others carry the thing higher, and understand it of all flesh in general, that rather than the apostle would offend his weak brother, he would not eat any flesh to his dying day; an hyperbolical expression, by which the apostle declares how far one Christian should condescend to another, to prevent each other's sinning against God. As if the apostle had said, "Verily I do not make so light of another's sin, nor set so light by the soul of my weak brother, nor by the blood of my blessed Saviour, as for flesh, that is, for an unnecessary thing, to make use of my liberty, when it may prove a temptation unto sin." From the whole of the apostle's discourse in this chapter, we learn, That it is the duty of Christians, in matters wherein they are at liberty by the law of God, to do a thing, or not to do it, to take that part which they see will give least occasion of sin unto their brethren, and to avoid that part which, if taken, will certainly give occasion unto others to sin. Although we be ourselves never so well satisfied as to

the lawfulness of the action, yet we ought to deny ourselves in some things, rather than be an occasion unto others to fall into sin: he forfeits the name of a Christian, who will not abridge himself of his Christian liberty to preserve his brother from sin and temptation.

CHAP. IX.

Our apostle having in the foregoing chapter exhorted the Corinthians to abridge themselves in the lawful use of their Christian liberty, when it will be prejudicial to weak Christians; in this chapter he propounds his own example for their encouragement and imitation, who, though he was an apostle, and had as great a freedom and liberty as any man in things undetermined by the law of God, yet restrained himself in several cases, which are recorded in this chapter, in which the holy apostle thus expresses himself:

AM I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

The first instance which the apostle gives of his freedom and liberty was this, That when he preached the gospel amongst them at Corinth, he had a liberty either to live on the gospel, and take maintenance of them for preaching, or to live upon his labour, following his trade of tent-making, according as he saw it best for the furtherance of the gospel. *Am I not free?* As if he had said, "Have not I as good a claim to freedom and Christian liberty as any man? For, *Am I not an apostle?* or an extraordinary messenger of Jesus Christ? And though I never saw the face of Christ upon earth, yet have I not seen him and heard him speaking to me from heaven? And is not the conversion of you, the Corinthians, to the Christian faith by my ministry, a fruit and seal of my ministry, a fruit and seal of my apostleship? Now if I be all this, certainly I have as great a right and claim to the use of Christian liberty as any of you can pretend to have; yet will I only make use of it for the benefit of others, and for the furtherance of the gospel." Learn we from the apostle's example in abstaining from that liberty and power which God had given him for receiving maintenance from them to whom he preached the gospel, how much it is the duty and concern of all Christians, to the end of the world, to abstain from the exercise of that liberty and rightful power granted to them by Christ, for avoiding the scandal of the weak, and promoting men's spiritual welfare.

2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

As if he had said, "Whatever others do, you of all men should not question my apostleship, for you were converted by it. You confirm and ratify my ministry, that it is of God, and that God is in it of a truth: the conversion of sinners, and the building up of saints, is God's seal to our ministry." Learn hence, That there is no such argument to prove a minister sent of Christ, as the success of his ministry in the conversion of souls unto God. This is God's seal to his office, that he is a minister called of God, and sent by God. Happy those ministers who can say unto their people, *Ye are our work, and the seal of our apostleship are ye in the Lord.* Yet must it not be concluded from hence, that a person is not a true minister of Christ, because he cannot produce this seal: the good of our ministry is not always known to ourselves, much less published to the world; more good is done many times by the ministry of the word than the minister knows of; the seed sometimes lies long under the clods before it fructifies; what is sown in one minister's time, comes up in another's; so one soweth, and another reapeth, but both he that reapeth and he that soweth shall rejoice together. But where this seal can be produced, it is a certain sign that such a minister is sent from God, and that God is with him, and owns him; yet it must be added, that though the success of our ministry to others is a seal of our office, and assures us that we are true ministers, yet it is the efficacy of the word we preach, upon our own hearts and lives, that is the witness of our sanctification, and the seal of our salvation. Lord, how sad will it be for any of us to have been instruments for the helping of others to heaven by the soundness of our doctrine, and go to hell ourselves for the badness of our example, and the wickedness of our lives!

3 Mine answer to them that do examine me in this; 4 Have we not power to eat and to drink? 5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? 6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

Here the apostle instances in another branch of his Christian liberty, and that was marriage; he could have taken a wife, as Peter and other apostles did, had he pleased, and have put the church to further charges in maintaining himself, a wife, and family, as did others, without blame: and he and Barnabas had power to forbear working for their living, and maintaining

themselves with their own labour in tent-making; they had power to ask maintenance of the Corinthians, if they pleased. But they considered the low circumstances which the church was in and under at that time, and continued both in a single state, and wrought with their hands to maintain themselves, when they might have expected maintenance from the church. *Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife?* that is, to marry, if we saw fit. Hence learn, 1. The lawfulness of the ministers of the gospel marrying, as well as other men: neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor the apostles of the New, did abhor the marriage-bed, nor judge themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. The doctrine forbidding marriage to any, (which the apostle says is honourable in all,) is called a doctrine of devils. Learn, 2. That no Christians, much less ministers, have power, (that is, any lawful power,) to marry such as are no Christians: their wives must be their sisters in Christ, that is, Christian women, at least by external and visible profession. 3. That husband and wife ought to be undivided companions one to another. *Have we not power to lead about a wife?* that is, to take her with us in our travels and journeyings from place to place, for our comfort and assistance. Husbands and wives are to be mutual companions, sharers in each other's sorrows, and partakers of one another's comforts.

7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

As if the apostle had said, "As soldiers are paid by those that employ them, and as husbandmen and shepherds live upon the fruits of their labours, so may I, and all the ministers of the gospel with me." Where note, 1. That the ministerial function is represented here as a warfare: the ministers of Christ are spiritual soldiers, they have many enemies to encounter with, and contend against. They are also planters, vine-dressers, husbandmen, shepherds: all which titles given to them do intimate and signify what care and painfulness, what diligence and watchfulness, should be found with them. Note, 2. That maintenance, a comfortable maintenance, from the people, is a debt due to the ministers of the gospel, who labour in the word and doctrine amongst them: *Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?* This is the first argument which our apostle here makes use of, to prove the minister's maintenance a duty, taken from the law of na-

tions, equity and custom; which do appoint and allow in soldiers, vine-dressers, and shepherds, yea, to all that labour for the use of others in their respective callings, a due reward of wages. What soldier goes to war at his own charges?

8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes no doubt *this* is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

A second argument produced by the apostle for the people's cheerful maintenance of the ministers of the gospel, is taken from the Levitical law: *Say I these things as a man; or saith not the law the same also?* As if he had said, "I do not speak this only rationally, as a thing very agreeable to the light of nature, and the law of nations, but the Levitical law says the same. For when God, in *Deut. xxv. 4*, forbids to muzzle the mouth of the ox, who by hard labour treadeth out the corn with his feet, his design therein is more than the bare taking care of the ox; for thereby he shows in general what equity should be used in the just rewarding of all men that labour for us; and in particular the spiritual labourers, and such as plough, and sow, and thresh, in the spiritual husbandry, should labour, in hope of a livelihood and subsistence, and eat their bread when they have earned it. If all men are encouraged to work, by a just expectation of the fruit of their own just labours, why should not the ministers of the word meet with the like encouragement, which all mankind look upon as their just due?"

11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

A third argument for the ministers' maintenance is here taken from common justice: *they sow spiritual things*. That is, they dispense the word and sacraments, and endeavour to make men spiritual and holy here, and happy hereafter; and therefore they ought to reap some of their people's *carnal things*, things for the support of their lives, and subsistence for themselves and their families: so that the ministers of God are not indebted to their people, but their people are indebted both to God and

them; they give their people things of a much greater value, and more excellent use, for things of a much lesser value, and more inferior use; for their carnal things they give them spiritual things.

12 If others be partakers of *this* power over you, *are* not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

Here we have a fourth argument for the Corinthians allowing St. Paul and other apostles a sufficient maintenance; namely, from their own example to other teachers at Corinth: as if he had said, "You maintain others, why not us? Do not you owe more to us, who first laid the foundation of a Christian church amongst you, and have begotten you through the gospel, than you do to others?" Nevertheless he tells them, that himself and Barnabas, although they had this unquestionable liberty, yet they never made use of it, but suffered hunger and thirst, weariness and want, lest it obstruct the course, and hinder the progress, of the gospel; whilst some might, though very unjustly, charge them with covetousness; and others, to save charges, might decline hearing of them.

13 Do ye not know, that they which minister about holy things live *of the things* of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? 14 Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live *of the gospel*.

A fifth argument is here produced for the ministers' maintenance, which is taken from the example of the Levites, who lived upon the things that were offered in the temple, and at the altar, and had a considerable part of the sacrifice allowed them by God himself for their ministration, under the law. In like manner, says the apostle, "It is the Lord's pleasure and appointment now under the gospel, (*Matt. x. 10. Luke x. 7.*) that they who preach the word should be maintained for it, and not diverted from their work by the cares and business of the world, but have a livelihood from their labour. Hence it clearly appears, that a maintenance for the ministry under the gospel is of divine right: if it was so under the law, it is likewise under the gospel; for so, says the apostle, *God has ordained*. God's will in this matter is the same under the New Testament as it was under the old; and as a maintenance in general is of divine right, so

things may make thus far a claim to be of that nature, that it is believed the wisdom of man cannot find out any better expedient, than by them to support a ministerial maintenance for the preachers of the gospel to the end of the world.

15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for *it were* better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

The apostle having thus asserted his liberty, now shows his great moderation in the use of it: although he had a liberty to marry, and to demand maintenance for his ministry as well as others, yet he denied himself in both. The apostle was charged by false teachers, that he preached the gospel for his own profit and advantage; whereas he gloried in the contrary, that he made the gospel without charge; looking upon it as his great honour, that he could and did preach the gospel freely, for sincere ends, and not out of sinister respects; and professes he had rather die by starving, than lose his advantage of glorying. Now the inference which St. Paul draws from all this discourse, of his declining the use of his lawful liberty, is this: If I your minister, for your profit, and the advantage of the gospel, abate of my own just right and unquestionable liberty, why should not you abate of yours, in the case of eating things offered unto idols, to keep your weak brother from destroying his soul by sinning against God?"

16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel. 17 For if I do this thing willingly I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

That which the apostle glories in, is not his bare preaching of the gospel, but his preaching of it freely and without maintenance: "For, says he, though I preach the gospel, that has nothing singular in it, others do it as well as myself, and I am bound to do it as well as others; for necessity is laid upon me, by special call and command from Christ, so to do; yea, woe is unto me for my disobedience to Christ in the heavenly vision, (*Acts xxvi.*) if I preach not the gospel. Now if I do this thing willingly, that is, freely, without demanding any thing of you for my pains,

which I might do, *I have a reward*; that is, a special reward from God, and may glory in it: but if I preach unwillingly, (demanding a maintenance for my pains, and refusing to preach without it,) all that can be said is this, that a dispensation of the gospel is committed to me; and so in preaching I only discharge a trust of which I cannot boast or glory." The strength of the apostle's argument lies here: "No man can reasonably boast of glory in, or expect an extraordinary reward for, the doing of that under a command from his superior to do, and that under a penalty too." Now this was his case: necessity was laid upon him to preach the gospel, but no necessity but what he laid upon himself to preach it freely; therefore for him to do it without demanding any reward from them for doing it, this made it matter of glorying to him, which he declares he had rather die than any should take from him. But was it the apostle's own glory that he was thus fond of, and concerned for, that he had rather lose his life, than lose it? No, it was the glory of God, the honour of the gospel, that was so inexpressibly dear unto him: the great apostle did, upon pure principles of faith and love from his heart and soul, design the glory of God, pursuant to which he did cheerfully and willingly apply himself to the preaching of the gospel, waiting upon God for his acceptance and reward, without expecting any wages (as he might) from them his Corinthian converts; and this was the matter of his boasting and glorying in the face of the false apostles, who insinuated that he preached the gospel for filthy lucre's sake.

18 What is my reward then? *Verily*, that when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge; that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

The sense is, "This gives me hopes of a reward extraordinary from God; namely, that I have preached the gospel to you, without being chargeable to any of you; for had I received maintenance from you, I found my reproaches would have brought an ill report upon me. To prevent which, I made use of my Christian liberty, and took nothing of you; which he calls, *his not abusing his power in the gospel.*" Learn hence, 1. That ministers, generally speaking, lawfully may expect, yea, require maintenance from their people, to whom they preach the gospel. Learn, 2. That although they may expect and demand maintenance for their ministry, yet in case

people are so poor that they cannot give it; or enemies so malicious as to open their mouths against them for it; or if it will hinder the progress of the gospel, by keeping people from coming under the preaching of it, fearing it should be chargeable to them; under such circumstances, if the minister can subsist without it, 'tis his certain duty to preach freely, and for such extraordinary services he may expect a more than ordinary reward. Learn, 3. That the liberty which God hath entrusted us with, must never be abused by us, to the prejudice of his glory, or the detriment of his gospel, or to the disadvantage of others. All such use of our liberty in any thing is indeed an abuse of it; therefore says the apostle here, *I abuse not my power in the gospel.*

19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. 20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

In these verses our apostle proceeds to show the Corinthians farther, how mightily he did abridge himself of his Christian liberty, which was the argument he was insisting upon. For, says he, *though I be free from all men*, as being a servant to none, yet *have I made myself as a servant to all, that I might gain the more to embrace the gospel.* To the unconverted Jews he became as a Jew, circumcising Timothy for their sakes, Acts xvi. 3, that he might gain the Jews. To them who in their opinion were yet under the obligation of the ceremonial law, he carried himself as a person under that law, though he knew himself free from it, to the end that he might gain them that are under the law, and accordingly he purified himself in the temple, Acts xxi. To them that were without law, that is, the Gentiles, who were without the ceremonial law, he became as a person without law, abstaining from the use of all ceremonies as they did.

But yet, *not being without law of God, but under the law of Christ*; that is, as to the moral law of God, which was not abolished, but reinforced by Christ he did never account himself free from that, nor durst do any thing contrary to the eternal rule of righteousness; and all this, *that he might gain them that are without law.* To the weak converts, either among Jews or Gentiles, he became as weak, by abstaining from what might hurt their weak consciences, *that so he might gain the weak.* Finally, he became all things to all men, by compliance with them in all lawful and indifferent things, *that he might gain as many as possibly he could.* And all this he did for the gospel's sake, that the gospel might be the better esteemed, and farther propagated, and he might himself partake of the promises and rewards of it, together with them to whom he preached it, and had effectually entertained it. Behold here the humility and charity of this great apostle; his ready condescension to the pitiable weaknesses of all men; his compliance with them in all lawful and indifferent things, for the glory of God, and the advantage of the gospel: a rare and singular pattern for all ministers and private Christians to imitate and follow. Now from this example of St. Paul's becoming all things to all men, and making himself a servant unto all, we learn, 1. One great duty of a gospel minister is not to be a slave to any, but a servant to all; not a servant to their lusts, but to their weaknesses and infirmities. Our apostle did not turn, as the flattering and false apostles did, with the tide and times, nor conform to them in what was sinful. He did not symbolize with all colours; nor was he a man for all hours or humours; For, says he, *if I please men*, (he means in any thing that is sinful) *I am no more the servant of Christ*, Gal. i. 10. But wisely considering the case and state of all men, he did accommodate his ministry for the gaining of as many as possibly he could. Some are all things to all men, that they may gain by all; a spirit not only unworthy of a minister, but of a man. But St. Paul complied with all men, and made himself the servant of all, that Christ might thereby gain, his gospel gain, yea, and they themselves gain; which hints to us a second observation, The great end which the holy apostle aimed at, in this his compliance with, and condescension towards, the weaknesses of his people: *This I do for the gospel's sake.* As if he had said, "Though I thus stoop and yield to all men, it is to serve my Master, not myself. Think not that I thus put myself into all forms

towards men for my own preferment in the world; but that Christ may be preferred in the hearts and acceptations of all men. *I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*" 1 Cor. x. 33. Behold here the noble mark which this minister of Christ had in his eye, *the saving of souls*. That he might hit it, he wisely observed the temper and state of his people, striving to render himself agreeable and acceptable unto all, that he might by all means save some; yet had he also an eye to himself in all this; he had respect to the recompence of reward, as lawfully he might. *This I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker thereof with you*; that is, that I may have a share myself in the promised rewards of the gospel which I have preached to you. Blessed be God, it is lawful for all the ministers and members of Christ to do good out of hope of reward; and that his glory and our own happiness are so inseparably connected and knit together, that by promoting the former we secure the latter.

24 Know ye not, that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

Our apostle, according to his custom in sundry epistles, does in the end of this chapter fall upon the use of terms agonistical, borrowed from the olympic and other Grecian games, celebrated near Corinth, in which the contending parties did put forth all their strength, to out-do one another. These games were running, cuffling, and wrestling: all which the apostle here alludes unto, and first to running: *They which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize*. So run the Christian race, that ye may obtain the prize. Learn hence, That Christianity is a race which God hath set us, and it is our duty faithfully and perseveringly to run it. In a race, the foundation of it is a prize; in a race there is a considerable distance between one goal and another; in a race-plat for the racers to run in, there are certain laws to run by, and there is a certain judge to determine who wins the crown fairly. Now this race of Christianity vastly differs from all other races thus: This is a spiritual race, it strains not legs and lungs, but faith and patience. Other races are performed by natural abilities, but this by a supernatural power and strength. Those races might be run without disturbance, but not this. Their reward but a garland of bays, ours a crown of immortality. But what is it to run this race? *Ans.* It supposes a motion,

it imports a vehement and intense motion, it implies progress and proficiency; every step brings the racer nearer the goal: and it implies perseverance; the racer must hold it to the last, or he loses his labour and reward: every one that thus runs shall obtain the prize, whereas in other races but one receiveth the prize.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

It was a custom amongst those that used at Corinth the fore-mentioned games of running and wrestling, to tie themselves to a strict prescribed diet, both for quality and quantity, by way of preparation. They did not indulge themselves in gluttony, or any sort of excess, but were temperate in all things, that the crown might be won by them; which, alas! was nothing but a garland of leaves or flowers. In imitation of whom, he advised the Corinthians to be very moderate in the use of all worldly things, and to abstain from whatsoever may hinder their running the Christian race, and their receiving the incorruptible crown.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

That is, "I run this race of Christianity myself, which I advise you unto. But my care is to run sure, not at uncertainties; to make sure of the crown at the end of the race, and I do not only run, but fight; I oppose whatever opposeth me." Here observe, The apostle changes the metaphor from that of running to the other game of cuffling; and says he did not fight like one that beats the air, but never hurts the adversary; no, he fought in good earnest with all his spiritual enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil. It is not every running that will gain the prize, nor every fighting that will obtain the victory; but it must be a running with all perseverance, and a fighting with our utmost power, that will bring us to heaven and eternal happiness.

27 But I keep under my body,—

The original word may be fitly rendered, I give myself blue eyes; alluding to the olympic game of cuffling, in which the combatants were wont with their blows to beat one another, till they made each other livid, their eyes black and blue. The sense is, that by mortification he used great severity upon himself, contending against and combating with that body of sin and

death which did obstruct and hinder him in running the Christian race which was set before him.

—And bring it into subjection :—

The word in the Greek is an allusion to the other exercise of wrestling, wherein the antagonists or contenders do strive to cast each other to the ground, and to keep them under. So he, the better to subdue his body of sin, was careful to keep down the body of flesh, which if pampered is apt to rebel. He concludes all with a reason why he exercised all this care and caution ; namely,

—Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.

That is, lest when he had acquainted them with the laws and rules of Christianity, and proposed to them the way of striving and getting the crown, he himself should at last prove a cast-away, or one unworthy to be approved or rewarded by God. From whence observe, 1. That it is possible for him who has been all his life preaching to others, and furthering them in their way to heaven, to be thrown himself into hell at last. Many that have prophesied in Christ's name shall yet perish in his wrath ; and such as have cast devils out of others, shall yet be cast to the devil themselves. Observe, 2. That such ministers as indulge their unruly appetites, giving the flesh whatever it craves, and can deny it nothing it desires, pampering the body to the prejudice of the soul, go not in St. Paul's road to heaven, but the contrary : they gratify what he mortified, they indulge what he subdued ; he administered to the wants, they to the wantonness, of the flesh : he knew that *Hagar* would quickly perk up, and domineer over *Sarah* ; that the body would quickly expect and command more attendance than the soul, except it were kept under : and for this reason, says our apostle here, *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.*

CHAP. X.

The scope of our apostle, in this chapter, is the same with that which he had been pursuing in the two foregoing chapters : namely, to dissuade Christians from eating of things offered unto idols, either publicly in the idol's temple, which was absolutely sinful ; or privately in the houses of any, to the offence and scandal of your weak brethren, which, when there was no scandal in the case, was lawful, but otherwise not. Of the former, he discourses from the first to the 23d verse, which he proves to be altogether unlawful. Of the latter he treats from ver. 23 to the end of the chapter ; and altogether he grants

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that eating of meat offered to an idol may lawfully be done itself in a private house, (especially when it is uncertain or unknown to be so offered,) yet when offence is thereby given to the weak brethren, it ought to be forbore. And accordingly he dissuades from it by many arguments in the chapter before us.

MOREOVER, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea ;

Amongst other arguments which the apostle produces to dissuade the Corinthians from eating things offered to idols in the idol temples, and to prove it absolutely unlawful for Christians to have communion with the Gentiles in their idolatrous banquets, the first is drawn from the danger of such sinful communion ; it would endanger their falling into such kinds of sins as the Israelites on that occasion fell into, and consequently expose them to such punishments as they suffered. But first of all, in the beginning of this chapter, he acquaints the Corinthians with the great favours and privileges which Almighty God vouchsafed to, and conferred upon, the Israelites, who came out of Egypt with Moses into the wilderness, who had a pillar of cloud to guide and protect them, the manna from heaven to sustain and uphold them, and water out of a rock to refresh and satisfy them. *All our fathers were under the cloud ; that is, under the conduct and protection of the cloud ; and all passed through the Red sea, as upon dry ground.* This cloud, which accompanied the Israelites in their journeyings, had a threefold use : 1. In respect of God ; it was a sign and symbol of the presence of God with them, and of his care and protection over them, for it encompassed their camp as a wall doth a city. Hence is that of the Psalmist, *He spread out a cloud for a covering to them, and fire to give light in the night season*, Psalm cv. 39. 2. In respect of the Israelites, the cloud did guide and direct them in their journeying : Psalm lxxviii. 14. *In the day he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.* And as the cloud did guide and direct Israel, so did it cool and refresh them in the wilderness, preserving them from the heat of the sun : it was a covering canopy over them in a scorching desert. 3. In respect of their enemies ; it was darkness to the Egyptians, and consequently protected the Israelites from their enemies, that they could not assault or fall upon them. It had a bright side to the Israelites, and a dark side to the Egyptians. Lord ! how easily canst thou make the same creature a comfort to thy

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children, and a terror to thine enemies. Every outward blessing is that, and no more, which thou art pleased to make it to us. A cloud shall guide, a cloud shall cover, a cloud shall comfort Israel; and the same cloud shall be darkness, yea, at thy command, shall be death, unto the Egyptians.

2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

Observe, 1. The Israelites are here said to be baptized in the cloud and in the sea; that is, the cloud which overshadowed them, did sometimes bedew and sprinkle them; and the Red sea, through which they passed, and its waters gathered into two heaps, one on the right hand, and the other on the left, betwixt which the Israelites passed, and in their passage seem to be buried in the waters, as persons in that age were put under the water when they were baptized: and thus were Israel baptized in the cloud and in the sea. Observe, 2. They are said to be baptized *unto Moses* in the cloud and in the sea: *Unto Moses*, that is, into the doctrine taught by Moses. They believed him and followed his conduct through the sea, and were confirmed in their belief of Moses, (the typical mediator) as a person employed by God; and were obliged under the ministry and guidance of Moses, to follow God whithersoever he led them. Observe, 3. That all this was a figure to which our baptism answers: both the cloud and the sea had some resemblance to our being covered with water in baptism, by which we are confirmed in the faith of Christ, and obliged to profess and own him, and to trust in and depend upon him, to serve and obey him, and this to the death. Behold how much of Christ and his gospel was shadowed and held forth to the Jews under the dispensation of the ceremonial law; they had Christ in their sacrifices, and we have all their sacrifices in Christ. The cloud, the sea, the manna, the rock, all typified Christ, and were resemblances and representations of him. Christ was as truly represented to the Jews as unto us; as truly, though not so clearly.

3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

They, that is, the fathers in the wilderness, did all eat of the manna which came down from heaven, which is here called *spiritual meat*; either because it came

down from heaven, which is the habitation of spiritual beings; or because it was food given out by the ministry of angels, those spiritual agents; or else it is called spiritual, that is, sacramental, meat, because it typified Christ, who is the bread of life, the true bread which came down from heaven. That manna was a type of Christ, thus appears: "Was manna provided by God for the Israelites without their labour and industry? so is Christ given unto men without any merit or work of theirs, but of the free gift and goodness of God. Did manna come down from heaven beside the ordinary course of nature? so was Christ's birth wonderful, and not as the birth of other men; being not begotten of mortal seed, but by the influence of the Holy Ghost. Was manna distributed to all alike, one not having more, and another less, but all an equal share? in like manner Christ communicates himself unto all alike, without acceptance of persons. A beggar may have as great a part in Christ as a prince. Again, as manna was food, plentiful food, sweet and pleasant food; so is Christ the food of life, very sweet to such a soul as can truly relish him. Farther, must the manna, before fit for food, be beaten in a mortar, or broken in a mill, and baked in an oven? so Christ, our heavenly manna, was broken on the cross, scorched in the fire of his Father's wrath, that he might become the spiritual food wherewith our souls are nourished unto everlasting life. Finally, as manna was given only in the wilderness, and ceased when the Israelites came into Canaan; so is Christ our spiritual meat, our sacramental food, whilst we are in the wilderness of this world; but when we shall come to the heavenly Canaan, we shall have no more any need of sacramental supports, but shall behold him face to face, and be satisfied with his likeness." *And they did all drink of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock Christ.* Here the water out of the rock is also called spiritual drink, it being typically and sacramentally so. *That rock was Christ*; that is, it typified Christ. The word is doth import as much as signifies or represents; so the rock is *Christ*; that is, it signified, represented, and typified Jesus Christ. For as the rock gave no water before it was smitten with the rod of Moses; so was Christ smitten upon the cross, and out of his side came forth water; and it was the rod in Moses's hand that smote and broke the rock; so was Christ smitten with the curse of the law, in the day when his soul was made an offering for sin. In a word, as the rock yielded water, not only to them that were first present at the

proaching of it, but followed them with its streams, in their stations through the wilderness; in like manner the water which gushed out from our smitten Saviour, the sweet fruits and benefits of his death, did not only belong to them who were present at the time and place of his suffering, but it doth and will accompany all believers to the end of this world. The virtue and efficacy of Christ's blood is now as great, as efficacious and effectual, as it was the first hour it was shed; the divinity of his person adds an eternal efficacy to his passion.

5 But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Although the Israelites were made partakers of the before-mentioned privileges and spiritual favours; though they were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did eat sacramental meat, and drink sacramental drink; yet it did not set them out of danger of God's displeasure, for they were overthrown, their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Learn hence, That no external privileges or prerogatives whatsoever can exempt persons from God's judgments, if they return not suitably to him for the favours and benefits received from him. The bare outward receiving of a sacrament is not saving to the soul of a person: and the unworthy receiving of sacraments, and unsuitable walking after them, do enkindle God's anger and provoke his heavy displeasure against persons, even to the cutting them off by untimely death here in this world: *With many of them God was displeased, and they were overthrown in the wilderness.*

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Observe here, 1. The sin charged upon the Israelites in the wilderness: *They lusted*; that is, after the flesh-pots of Egypt, and to return thither again. They had manna for forty years together; but being tied to it, (though angels' food, that is, most excellent food,) they grew weary of it. Lord! how exceedingly indebted are we to thy liberality and bounty, in that plenty and variety of creature refreshments which thou affordest us! The beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes in the sea, are freely given us, not barely for necessity, but delight, and do all administer to our support and comfort. Observe, 2. How the apostle calls upon us to improve examples, that we may not be made ex-

amples. *These things*, that is, their sufferings, *were our examples*; they were for our caution to receive warning by them, not to walk in those soul-defiling ways in which they have walked, fallen, and perished. A wise Christian may receive much good by observing the dealings of God with them that are evil; for God is unchangeable, just, and holy, and will not favour that in one person which he punishes in another: *These things were our examples.* As if the apostle had said, O ye Corinthians, look upon the dead bodies of the Israelites which are cast upon the shore of the scriptures for a warning to you; follow not the same course, lest you meet with the same curse; if you tread the same path, expect the same punishment, for God is as righteous now as he was then; he hates, and will punish sin in you, as much as he did in them: *These things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they lusted.*

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them: as it is written, The people eat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Our apostle being still dissuading the Corinthians from eating of things offered unto idols, and thereby from holding communion with the Gentiles in their idolatrous banquets in their idol-temples, he sets before them the idolatry of the Jews, who sat down to eat and to drink of the sacrifices offered to the golden calf, and rose up to play: that is, to dance before the golden calf, after the manner of the heathen, this being one of their rites by which they honoured their gods. He farther advises them to take heed how they mix with idolaters in their feasts, lest they be given up to fornication, as the Israelites were in the wilderness with the daughters of Moab, *Numb. xxv.* of whom there fell in one day three and twenty thousand by the immediate hand of God. Learn hence, That Almighty God has left many instances upon record, in his holy ward, of the severity of his justice upon persons guilty of idolatry and fornication, and all other sins, on purpose to warn all of their sin and danger in the perpetration and commission of them. To sin against example is an aggravation of sin.

9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 10 Neither

murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Observe here a double sin, which the Corinthians are warned against: tempting and murmuring. *Neither tempt ye Christ*, by trying how long his patience will last, as the Israelites did, when (as the angel of the covenant) he went before them in the wilderness, *Numb. xxi. 5, 6*. Here note, The object or person whom the Israelites are said to tempt, *Christ*: which proves, 1. His pre-existence before his incarnation; the Israelites could not have then tempted him, had he not been then existent. 2. His divinity; he who is here called *Christ*, is by the Psalmist called *God*, *Psal. cvi. 14*. *They tempted God in the desert*. Christ had not a human nature then to be tempted in, they tempted him therefore as he was God: a good argument to prove the divinity of our Saviour, made use of by the ancients. The other sin warned against is, murmuring: *Neither murmur ye*: that is, do not repine, because ye are forbidden to be present at the idolatrous feasts of the Gentiles in the idol-temples; neither do ye murmur, by reason of the persecutions which you do or may endure for the sake of Christianity, and the cause of Christ. Learn hence, That to murmur at, or be impatient under, any of the providential dispensations of God, is both great sin and folly. 'Tis as high presumption and wickedness to be dissatisfied with God's works of providence, as with his work of creation; to quarrel at what God doth, is as unchristian-like, yea, as uncreature-like, as to quarrel at what God has made. Therefore *murmur not, as the Israelites murmured*. Observe, secondly, A double punishment inflicted on the Israelites for this double sin committed; such as tempted were destroyed of fiery serpents, *Numb. xxi. 6, 7*. The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people: the sting and venom of those serpents was inflaming, spreading, and killing: much people of Israel died. And such as murmured, were destroyed of the destroyer; that is, by the destroying angel, in that plague mentioned, *Numb. xiv. 37*. Such variety of judgments has Almighty God, with which to punish and plague an incorrigible and unreclaimable people.

11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come.

That is, the history of the Israelites' sins and punishments was written and re-

corded by God in the holy scriptures, for the use and benefit of all succeeding generations, and particularly for us, who live in the last ages of the world, to warn us to avoid the like sin, that we may escape the like punishments. Learn hence, That the fall of others, whether into sin, or under judgment for sin, should be caution and warning to us to take heed of sinning. Here the apostle sums up the most remarkable judgments which fell upon the Jews in their passage from Egypt to Canaan, and closes with this application to Christians: *These things happened to them for ensamples*. In the original it is *as types*: they befell them typically, that in them we may see how God will deal with us if we take their course; those calamities which destroy some, should instruct others. Many will never see sin in itself, some will see it in the type and ensample, that is, in the judgment of God upon others, and those that will not see sin in the lashes of severity upon others, shall certainly feel it upon their own backs. Such as will not improve examples, shall undoubtedly be made examples.

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

These words are an inference which our apostle draws from the foregoing discourse. Seeing that so many who enjoyed great privileges among the Jews, were yet punished greatly for their sins; seeing that sacraments are no privileges either from sin, or from plagues; therefore *let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, &c.* Where note, 1. A great mutability to which human nature is subject: he that thinketh he standeth, may fall. Man's condition is according to his place and station: this is threefold. The first place is heaven: this is fixed and confirmed, a kingdom that cannot be shaken: the saints there are standing pillars, free from all possibility of falling. The second place is hell, where sinners are bound hand and foot; and being fallen, are without any possibility of rising. The third place is this earth on which we live, where men both stand and fall; and the best are subject to failing, being sons of Adam as well as sons of God; partly flesh and partly spirit. Note, 2. The vigilancy required in order to our standing, *Take heed*. How many thousands have fallen by a presumptuous confidence of their own strength in standing! they fell by thinking it impossible to fall. A Christian's motto is *Cavendo Tutus*; never safe, but when wary and watchful. Let a Christian always keep a jealous eye upon the weakness and inconstancy of his na-

ture, and with a believing eye look up to the promise and power of God, and he shall be both preserved from falling, and also be presented faultless and unblamable in the day of Christ: if ever we stand in the day of trial, 'tis fear and faith must enable us to stand.

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Here the apostle answers a plea which the Corinthians might probably make for their compliance with their fellow-citizens, in eating things offered unto idols in their temples with them; namely, that thereby they should avoid persecution. Fear not that, says the apostle, you have hitherto been preserved, and *no temptation has taken you, but such as is common unto man*; that is, you have not yet been exercised with any trial, but what is human, what the ordinary strength and resolution of human nature is able to bear: but in case you should be tried with extremity of suffering, and that you must either comply with the heathen idolatry, or endure suffering to extremity, yet you have the promise of a faithful God for your support in that case: *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted at any time above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way so far to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* Learn hence, 1. That it is a great addition to an affliction not to see or discern a way to escape, and get out of affliction: God is exceeding gracious in our afflictions, in that he doth not hedge us in on every side, and hinder all possibility of escape out of our troubles. Learn, 2. That the consideration of God's strength to support us in and under our sufferings, is a mighty encouragement to us to grapple with them resolutely, and to bear them patiently and submissively: if our sufferings were intolerable, and human nature were not divinely assisted to stand under them, we should be forced to consult our present ease and deliverance, and choose sin rather than affliction; but the assistance of God makes suffering work easy.

14 Wherefore my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak as to wise men: judge ye what I say.

Here our apostle resumes his exhortation to the Corinthians, not to meddle with the mysteries of paganism, nor to eat of

things offered unto idols; assuring them it was no less than idolatry, in the account of God, to eat of those things which were taken from their execrable altars, as a part and remnant of those sacrifices to idols, which were performed in the city of Corinth with all the pomp of an abominable superstition. This participation of things offered to idols, in the idol-temples, our apostle calls idolatry: *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, flee from idolatry.* Here note, That the nature of man is extremely prone to idolatry, and very ready to comply with men in their idolatrous practices. Note, 2. That the idolatry of the Jews of old, and of Christians since, who know and owned the true God, and gloried in him, was and is far worse than the idolatry of pagans, who knew him not, nor ever gloried in him. Observe farther, How our apostle appeals to themselves, and leaves it to them to judge whether they did not do very ill, to be present at the feasts upon the heathen sacrifices, and eat of things offered unto idols: he leaves it to themselves to judge, *Judge ye what I say.* There is a judgment of discretion which persons ought to use in matters of religion, and not to deliver up themselves blindfold to the conduct of their teachers. The church of Rome by denying the people this liberty, make them slaves; they put out the people's eyes, to make them fit for a blind obedience. Our apostle was far from this practice. Let wise men, says he, judge what I say.

16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

These words are a special argument, made use of by the apostle to dissuade the Christians from joining with the heathens in their impure feasts in the old temples—the Gentiles have fellowship with the idols in those feasts, as Christians have communion with Christ at his holy table. So that the argument runs thus: "If believers by communicating with Christ at his holy table have real communion with him; then also those that do communicate with idolaters do become partakers of communion with them in their impure feasts. But believers do the first, namely, at the Lord's table they communicate with Christ." This he proves from the words before us, *The cup of blessing, &c.* Where observe, 1. A description of the Lord's supper in both the parts of it, namely, The external and visible part, bread and wine; the internal and spiritual part, the

body and blood of Christ. Observe, 2. The ministerial actions performed in this solemn ordinance, and they are the blessing of the cup, and the breaking of the bread. 3. Here is the great end and design of God in the institution of this ordinance, namely, that believers might thereby enjoy a spiritual fellowship and communion with Christ their head: *Is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* Learn hence, That one great end and design of Christ in the institution of his supper was this, that believers might enjoy a sweet fellowship and communion with himself therein.

17 For we, *being many*, are one bread, *and one body*; for we are all partakers of that one bread.

The apostles argument lies thus: As Christians, though many, yet by virtue of their society in the same worship, are compacted together as it were into one loaf or lump, that is, into one mystical body, in that they partake of one and the same sacramental bread; so those that communicate with idolaters, in eating things offered unto idols, are compacted together as it were into one body, forasmuch as they communicate in one and the same sacrifice: as many grains of corn moulded together make one loaf, and the juice of many grapes make one cup; so Christians, though many, yet are one visible church, one mystical body, and declare themselves so to be by their fellowship together at the Lord's table.

18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? 19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? 20 But *I say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

Here another argument against eating things offered to idols is produced by our apostle, and it runs thus: "As in the Jewish church all persons that did eat of the peace-offerings which were laid upon God's altar, did by that act declare themselves members of the Jewish church, and that they owned the God of the Jews to whom these sacrifices were offered: in like manner the converted Corinthians, by eating part of those beasts which were sacrificed in the idol's temple, did by that act declare their owning of that idol, and that idolatrous worship which had been

there performed, and were really partakers of that idolatrous altar; not that an idol is any thing, or that which is offered to the idol any thing, that can of its own nature pollute and defile; but the plain truth was, the heathens were seduced by the devils to offer these sacrifices, and they were devils whom they worshipped; though not in their own intention, yet in God's estimation: and consequently those that did eat of those feasts are supposed to join in those sacrifices, and thereby to hold communion with devils.

21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

That is, "Ye cannot have communion with Christ and with idolaters too: your communicating with Christ in the Lord's supper is utterly inconsistent with communicating with devils in the idol's feasts, for this were to do homage to two contrary lords, God and Satan, and to profess service to both." Here observe, 1. A sacramental table described: it is the table of the Lord; so called, because he that is Lord of lords did institute it for the remembrance of his own death. Observe, 2. An impossibility declared, that none can be worthy partakers at the Lord's table that hold communion with sin: true, idolatry is the sin here specified, or sacrificing unto devils; but it holds true of all sin in general, and of having fellowship with Satan in any of the unfruitful works of darkness. Learn hence, That no person can really enjoy any fellowship and communion with Christ at his holy table, who maintains correspondence with sin, and holds communion with Satan.

22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

Observe here, 1. That the worship of God is that which he is very tender and jealous of: never was husband so jealous of the chastity of his suspected wife, as God is jealous in point of worship; idolatry is a provoking God to jealousy. Observe, 2. That such as worship idols, or are guilty of idolatrous worship in any kind or degree, must expect God a jealous revenger, and will find themselves not strong enough to contend with him. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy, by joining devils in competition with him! Are we stronger than he? Who knows the power of his anger? The strength of God should make sinners tremble."

23 All things are lawful for me, but

all things are not expedient : all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

Our apostle having in the former part of this chapter resolved the case concerning public eating things offered unto idols in the idol-temples, and by several arguments proved it to be absolutely unlawful; he comes now to resolve another case, concerning private buying and private eating of things offered unto idols; for it seems to have been a custom to set to sale in the market, flesh that was sacrificed, (the gain whereof went to the priests,) as well as other flesh; but first he answers an objection. Some might be ready to say, all things are lawful for me; that is, all meats may be lawfully eaten by me. If so, says the apostle, yet all lawful things are not expedient to be done in respect of our weak brother; *plainly intimating*, that there are many things lawful in themselves, which, considered under such and such circumstances, are very inexpedient: so far are they unlawful.

24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth*.

These words may be understood two ways: 1. Let no man seek his own, that is, only his own wealth. 2. Let no man seek his own wealth: that is, to the prejudice of others, though never so much to his own advantage; teaching us, that it is the duty of every Christian not merely to look at his own profit and pleasure, but at the benefit and advantage of others, as that which edifies, or tends to promote holiness in others; and that in the use of our Christian liberty we must regard rather the edification and salvation of others, than the gratification of ourselves.

25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, *that* eat, asking no question for conscience' sake: 26 For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

Here the apostle resolves the case, whether it were lawful to buy that meat in the market which had been offered to an idol in the temple. He determines, 1. That it was; if it be sold in the shambles, it is to be looked upon as common food, and they may freely buy it without any scruple of conscience. But how came meat to be sold in the shambles, which was offered and sacrificed in the temples of the Gentiles? *Answer*, It is probable that the priests, who had a share in the beasts that were offered unto idols, or the people, who had also a share returned them out of their own offerings, did bring such meat to be sold in the

market: in this case, says the apostle, ask no questions about it. Observe, 2. He assigns the reason for it: because *the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*. That is, those things that are sold for food in the market, are to be looked upon as the creatures of God, made for, and sanctified to, the use of man; and therefore you may eat of any creature which the Lord provideth for your food, without scruple of conscience, when others are not scandalized at it. 1 Tim. iv. 4. Every creature of God is good, if received with thanksgiving.

27 If any of them that believe not bid you to a *feast*, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience' sake. 28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not, for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience' sake: 'for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

Our apostle here puts another case: "Suppose an unbeliever, an infidel or heathen, did invite a believer, a Christian, to a feast of civil friendship in his private house, (not to a feast upon a sacrifice in the idol-temple, which was absolutely unlawful,) what was to be done in this case?" He declares they may warrantably go and eat whatever is set before them without scruple, but would have them ask no questions about the lawfulness of it; nevertheless, if the master of the feast, or any present at the feast, shall suggest that some part of the meat has been offered to an idol, in that case he would have them forbear, lest they should encourage any man to idolatry; adding his reason as before, *For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*; that is, there is plenty and variety of other meat to be had, which God, the Creator of all things, the Lord of the whole earth, has allowed us the free use of; so that we may well let the idol sacrifices alone. Here we see, that an action lawful in itself becomes sinful, and is condemned as such, when there is a breach of charity in the doing of it.

29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another *man's* conscience? 30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of, for that for which I give thanks?

Here the apostle tells them that they ought to abstain from that which is lawful and indifferent in itself, for the sake of

another man's conscience. This meat had not been unlawful to them, though offered to idols, had they not been told that it was so offered; but being made acquainted therewith, for the sake of him that showed thee it was offered to idols, forbear eating; for why should our liberty be so used by us as to be judged of and condemned by another man's conscience? It is not enough that we do what is just and right in our own sight, but we must provide things honest in the sight of all men. *Whosoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; these we must practise, and none but these.* And observable is the apostle's reason, why we should, for the sake of another, abstain from eating that meat which was lawful in itself, ver. 30: namely, to prevent being evil spoken of: *Why am I evil spoken of?* That is, why should I cause another to speak evil of me, for eating that meat which I might without any prejudice forbear? For in so doing I shall certainly abuse my liberty, grieve God, and offend the weak.

31 Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Our apostle concludes his whole discourse with three excellent rules, to direct all Christians how they should govern themselves in the use of their lawful liberty, as to things that are of indifferent nature; that is, neither commanded nor forbidden in the word of God. The first is this, to refer all our actions in general, both natural, civil, and religious, to the glory of God; to make that our supreme aim, our ultimate end, in all we do, in all we design, in all we desire. A Christian is to perform his natural actions to spiritual purposes; and whilst he is feeling and refreshing his body at his own table, must have an eye at his serving God both with soul and body. Farther, not only in our natural actions, but in our civil employments, in our lawful recreations; but especially, and above all, in our religious duties, must we propound the glory of God as our principal aim, our chief scope, our supreme end. This injunction, *Do all to the glory of God*, is applicable to all the actions of human life.

32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.

Here we have the second rule given for ordering all the affairs of human life: Give no offence to any, neither to the unbelieving Jew, nor to the unconverted Gentile, nor to the weak members of the church of

God; particularly, give no offence to these, by eating things offered to idols at any time, or in any place, where any may be scandalized; for the Jew will consider that you are enemies to the law and the prophets. The Gentiles will believe that your abhorrence to idols is not real, when they see you eat things offered unto idols before their faces; and the weak Christian will be tempted by your example to revolt from the Christian faith. Therefore do nothing that may tend to the hurt, or just offence, either of Jew, Gentile, or Christian.

33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

The last rule which the apostle lays down, is his own practice and example, who in indifferent things accommodated himself to all men. *I please all men*; that is, I seek and endeavour to please all men, and in all things; that is, in all lawful things, and in all other things wherein the law of God has left me at liberty; for neither in the omission of any thing which God commanded, nor in the commission of aught which he had forbidden, would St. Paul please any man in the world. And when he did please all men, it was for their profit and advantage, not his own: to promote their eternal salvation, not his own temporal interest: *I please all men, that they may be saved.* Learn hence, 1. That no men must be pleased by sin, nor pleased in their sins. The smallest duty must be preferred before the pleasing of all the men in the world. Learn, 2. We may and ought to seek the pleasing of men, with subserviency and in subordination to the pleasing of Almighty God. Learn, 3. That inordinate man-pleasing is fruitless, needless, and endless: when you have endeavoured to please most, how many will be displeased when you have done your best! God himself, Jesus Christ, his holy prophets, apostles, saints, and servants, could never please the world; and can any of us expect to do it? St. Paul, though he became all things to all men, yet could save but some. The world hates godliness, and godly persons, and will never be pleased with that which they hate: let pleasing of God be our great business, and, in subordination to him, endeavour to please all men for their profit, that they may be saved.

CHAP. XI.

BE ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

The apostle had in the foregoing chap-

ters, by many cogent arguments, exhorted the Corinthians to deny themselves the lawful use of their Christian liberty, for the benefit of their brethren; to enforce which argument he propounds to them his own example in this verse, *Be ye followers of me even as I follow Christ*. Where note, 1. The duty recommended to their practice; namely, to follow their spiritual guide: *Be ye followers of me*. It is the standing duty of a people whom God honours with the enjoyment of faithful spiritual guides, to follow their faith, and to imitate their exemplary conversation; the graces of all Christians in general, but of the ministers of the gospel in particular, whether living or dead, are patterns set forth to the world for their careful imitation: and for omission herein they must certainly become accountable to God. Note, 2. With what great modesty and caution, with what restriction and limitation, St. Paul propounds his own example to the Corinthian's view: *Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ*. As if he had said, "If at any time you find me, your spiritual guide, stepping aside, and walking unanswerably to that uniform pattern of holy and humble obedience, which the Lord Jesus set both before you and me, in his own exemplary life, be sure you decline my example, and follow not my footsteps." Learn hence, That the best of ministers, and the best of men, being but men, our imitation of them must be an universal, but a limited imitation; we must follow pastors, teachers, nay, apostles themselves, no farther than they follow Christ, their infallible Lord and master: *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*.

2 Now, I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

This commendation is to be restrained to the sounder part of the church at Corinth, who were mindful of his precepts and instructions which he had delivered to them concerning matters appertaining to the public worship of God; which precepts and rules for the worship of God he calls *traditions*, because they were immediately delivered to the church, either from the apostle's mouth, or by writing. This place, though produced, yet makes nothing for the unwritten traditions of the Romish church. Let them prove by authentic testimony, that their fardels of traditions were delivered to the church from the mouth of the apostles, and we will receive them. *Now I praise you, brethren*. Here it deserves

a remark, that the apostle, being about to reprove certain disorders in the church at Corinth, ushers in his reproof for what was amiss, with a commendation of what was praise-worthy among them; *I praise you, brethren*. Like the physician, who wraps his bitter pill in honey or sugar before he gives it into his patient's mouth. It is wisdom to intermix commendations with our reproofs, that the latter may take more place when accompanied with the former.

3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ: and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

Here our apostle answers the query, and resolves the case which the Corinthians had put to him, and laid before him, about church-order, and concerning the decent behaviour of men and women in church-assemblies. And first he reminds them, that a subordination of persons in the church of God ought to be observed and kept: that as Christ, as Mediator, is inferior to God the Father, but is the head and lord of all men, as Creator and Redeemer; so the man is the head of the woman, and as such she must show her subjection unto the man. As Christ, as Mediator, acts in subordination to the Father, so must the woman act in subordination to the man. The Socinians would wrest this text to confirm them in their blasphemous denial of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Here, say they, the apostle declares that *the head of Christ is God*. Now the most high God can have no head above him; therefore Christ, who hath an head above him, cannot be the most high God." The modern and general answer is, that God is here called *the head of Christ* as Mediator, in which relation he received his kingdom from him, and exerts it for him; and therefore is elsewhere styled the Father's servant, *Behold my servant*, &c. because he doth all things according to his Father's will, and with a fixed eye to his Father's glory. But the ancients reply to this objection thus: "That God is said to be the head of Christ, as he is the Father of the Son, and so the cause of him; and as the woman is of the same nature with the man, who is her head, so is Christ of the same nature with God the Father, who is here called his head: *The head of Christ is God*."

4 Every man, praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonoureth his head. 5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her*

head uncovered, dishonoureth her head : for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

By the man's *praying and prophesying*, understand his performing any divine offices in the church, as prayer, and expounding the scriptures, singing of psalms, and the like. By doing this *covered*, understand not the natural covering of the hair, but an artificial covering by a veil, after the manner of women, which is a token of subjection. By *dishonouring his head*, understand either, 1. *Christ*, who in the former verse was called the *head of every man*. He that administers in the church in holy things represents Christ, who is the head of the church; therefore by covering the head he declares a subjection in his administration, and doth as it were make the church the head of Christ, instead of Christ's being the head of the church. Or else, 2. By dishonouring the head, may be understood the minister's own head: he betrayed his superiority, and lesseneth the honour and dignity of his sex, by using such a gesture in divine offices, as is a token of inferiority and subjection; for in that country, at that time, it was a sign of subjection to have the head covered, but a sign of power and dominion to have the head uncovered. The contrary is found with us at this day; for those that have power over others, now keep their heads covered, and those that are inferior to others, keep their heads uncovered before them, ver. 6. By the woman's *praying and prophesying*, is understood either prophesying extraordinarily, (which we read the women sometimes did both in the Old and New Testament, and were called prophetesses, *Luke ii. 36. Acts xxi. 9.*) Or else, by the woman's *prophesying*, is to be understood praising God in hymns and psalms, 1 *Chr. xxv. 1, 2, 3. They prophesied with harps, psalteries, and cymbals, giving thanks, and praising the Lord*; where prophesying and praising the Lord are the same thing. By the woman's *prophesying with her head uncovered*, to the dishonour of her head or husband, is to be understood her appearing unveiled in the church, open and barefaced in public; which was accounted, 1. An immodest, unbecoming, and unseemly guise. 2. Arrogant; her being unveiled and uncovered was a token of her usurping an undue authority over the man, and of her casting off that subjection which she was under by the law of her creation to him. 3. Superstitious; it being a fantastical imitation of the shepriests and prophetesses of the Gentiles when they served their idols, and particu-

larly when they sacrificed to Bacchus, who used to have their faces uncovered, their hair dishevelled, hanging at its full length round about their ears. Now the Corinthian women, in imitation of these heathen women, (for the female sex is very fond and exceeding prone to follow the fashion,) did cast off their veils, discovered their faces, dishonoured their heads, even their natural heads, (as well as their economical head, their husband,) it being then and there accounted as immodest a thing for a woman to appear in public uncovered, as to appear with her head shaven. From the whole learn, That God requires at the hands of all persons, who either administer unto him, or stand before him, a decent behaviour and comely accommodation in his house, especially in the acts and exercises of his worship and service. For if in their habit and dress, surely much more in their gesture and deportment, doth he hate what is unseemly and unbecoming in any person. Learn, 2. That it is especially the duty of persons employed in divine administrations to demean themselves as those who represent our Lord Jesus, managing themselves with a due authority and decent gravity, becoming the ambassadors of God. So then it is a general observation of decency in our outward behaviour, when worshipping God before others, which our apostle here recommends as a special duty.

6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn; but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. 7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man.

Our apostle here proceeds by many arguments to evince and prove the woman's inferiority and subjection to the man, and that she ought to have a covering upon her head as a sign and token of it. First, because the image of God, that is, the image of his majesty, dominion, and power, shineth forth most brightly in the man, therefore he ought to have his head uncovered: *Man is the image and glory of God*. But is not the woman so likewise? *Ans.* Consider the woman according to her specific nature, and so she was created after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, as well as the man: but then consider the woman according to her personal relation to her husband, and in that regard the woman is not the image of God; because dominion, which is the image of

God, is the man's privilege; and subjection the woman's duty. *But she is the glory of the man*; that is, it is the glory and honour of man, that God hath given him superiority over so excellent a creature as the woman; for if his dominion over the irrational creatures be his glory and honour, then what a glory and honour it is for a man to have so excellent a creature as the woman, a creature endued with reason like himself, subject to him! But as in this sense the man is the glory of the woman, so in another sense the woman is the glory of the man. She communicates with him in all his dignity, how great soever; whatever natural or civil excellency is in him, reflects on her: *Uxor fulget radiis mariti*, the wife shines with the rays of her husband's honour. And the woman being thus in a state of inferiority, she ought to profess her subjection to her husband by wearing a veil.

8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man; 9 Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.

Another argument which the apostle offers, to prove the inferiority of the woman, is this, That originally the man was not made of the woman, or for the woman, but the woman was made of the man, (his rib,) and for the man, that is, for his service and comfort, to be an help meet for him, and to be in subjection to him. Man had this prerogative, to be immediately from God; but the woman was from man, and to be administering and subservient to man, and consequently to cover her head in token of her submission to him.

10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels.

Moreover, for this cause ought the woman to have power, (that is, a veil upon her head, as a sign and in token of her husband's power, and her own subjection,) *because of the angels*; that is, say some, 1. Because of the law of subjection given her by the ministry of angels. 2. Because of the pastors, teachers, and ministers of the church, say others, who are often in scripture styled angels. 3. Because of the evil angels, as some interpret it; the woman being tempted by Satan, the prince of evil angels, to commit the first sin, which is a perpetual cause of shame to her and her posterity, and which increased her and their subjection to the man; for which reason the woman ought to be veiled and covered (in the church-assemblies

particularly) as a token of shamefacedness and subjection. 4. The more general interpretation is, because of the good angels, who are present in the assemblies of the saints, and eye-witnesses of their carriage there; therefore the woman ought to do nothing indecent in the presence of those holy spirits. And besides, she has the angels for her pattern and precedent, who cover their faces and veil their heads, in token of subjection to Almighty God. Note here, 1. That it has been a general opinion among Jews, heathens, and Christians, that good angels are more particularly present with us in the places, and at the times, of God's public worship; yea, that they are not only present with us, but observant of us, and assisting to us, in the performance of all religious exercises, especially prayer: and therefore the Jews speak of a particular angel, whom they call the angel of prayer. Note, 2. That therefore all persons, both men and women, ought to demean themselves with all modesty, reverence, and decency, in the worship of God, out of regard to the angels, who are there present, observing their carriage and behaviour. True, the angels cannot penetrate into the inward devotion of the mind, which God only observes; but they observe and take notice of the outward decency of our carriage, and the reverence of our deportment. But, Lord, how little is this considered, and by how few among us, in our religious assemblies! With regard to God, who sees our hearts, we should more particularly compose our minds to the greatest seriousness and sincerity in our devotions; and with a particular regard to the holy angels who are there present, we should be careful also of our outward behaviour: but to our shame be it spoken, there are multitudes amongst us in our Christian assemblies, whom neither the presence of angels, nor the observing eye of him who is the Lord of angels, can influence to any tolerable decency of behaviour in the house of prayer, where the eyes of God and angels, of ministers and men, are upon them. Such without repentance must never expect to dwell hereafter with God and his holy angels in heaven, but take up their lodgings with the devil and his angels in an eternal hell, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

11 Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. 12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

Because the apostle might seem to have been too harsh towards the woman, and lest the man should thereupon take occasion to carry himself with pride and insolence towards her, he prudently intimates the mutual help and need which both man and woman stand in of one another; for since the creation of the first man, all men are by the woman. And as men have no being but by the woman, so the woman without the man cannot exist or propagate. For as at the first creation the woman was taken out of the man, so now in generation the man is of the woman; and by the woman; she conceives him, brings him forth, suckles him, and brings him up; and all this by the wise disposal of God, who made the woman out of the man, and by his benediction increaseth man by the woman. From which consideration our apostle infers, that both man and woman should look upon their distinct prerogatives as given them by God, and carry it not with pride and insolence, but with respect and kindness each to other; and especially that the woman be in subjection to the man, and testify that subjection by all the signs of it, particularly by her being veiled and covered, which is the argument our apostle is here insisting upon.

13 Judge in yourselves: Is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? 14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? 15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given her for a covering. 16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle closes his discourse, in which he had reproved the Corinthians, the men for covering, the women for uncovering, their heads, and laying aside their veils in time of religious worship: by an appeal to themselves and their own judgment concerning the matter he is speaking of, and reproving them for; namely, men's praying with their heads covered, and women with their heads uncovered. Observe, 2. How the apostle proceeds to blame both sexes for another disorder; namely, that men wore their hair like women, and that women appeared in the guise of men as to their hair. Here he lets them know that both these kinds of disorders are repugnant to the institution of God, and the dictates of natural reason; *Doth not nature itself teach you?*

That is, (1.) The general dictates of natural reason. (2.) The particular law of nature, concerning the distinction of sexes. (3.) Usage and common custom, which is a second nature. All these suggest, that for men to wear their hair at full length like the woman, is uncemely and unnatural in the manly sex, but so to do is comely and natural in the female. Learn hence, That God disallows, and even nature itself condemns, every thing that tends to the confounding of the sexes, which it is his will and pleasure should be visibly distinguished. It is a great offence to God, and contrary to one end for which apparel was given, when either the man or the woman wears apparel contrary to their sex; and what is said of apparel, their artificial covering, may be affirmed of the hair, that is their natural covering. "It is a shame for either sex to wear their hair in an uncemely and indecent manner, disagreeable to the natural modesty of either sex." Observe, 3. How the apostle appeals to the custom and practice of the churches of God in the cases before us. The custom of all the churches is against women's being uncovered, as an unseemly thing. It is a known rule, *Ubi nihil certi statuit Scriptura, mos populi Dei, et instituta majorum, pro lege tenenda sunt*: We ought not to dissent and differ from the custom and practice of the church of Christ in matters not positively determined: but the custom of the church must sway with us, with whose practice it is our duty to be as concordant as we can. *If any man will be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.* Learn thence, That in things only respecting decency, and in compliance with which there is no violation of the command of Christ, the custom of the church of Christ should determine us, and be as a standing rule unto us. Learn, 2. That it argues a contentious spirit, and savours very much of pride, in matters of little moment to be singular in our practice, and to create disturbance to the church of God. *If any man seem to be contentious, &c.*

17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. 18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. 19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

Our apostle here enters upon a new ar-

gument or subject-matter of discourse; namely, to reprove the abuses which were crept in amongst them, in their administration of the holy sacrament of the Lord's supper. And the first abuse which he blames them for, was, the divisions and factions which were found amongst them; *I hear that there are schisms amongst you.* Where we are to understand by schisms, not a separation from the unity of the catholic church, but of sects and divisions in the church; they did not separate from the church, but they ate the Lord's supper separately in the church, and the whole congregation did not join together in the celebration of that ordinance. Though we do not separate from the communion of the catholic church, yet if we occasion division and dissension groundlessly in the church, we justly fall under the imputation and charge of schism. Observe next, The apostle argues *a minori ad majus*; he did easily believe there were divisions, because *there must be also heresies among them.* Heresies were worse than schisms, false doctrines more dangerous than divisions. Heresy is an error in the fundamentals of religion, maintained with obstinacy. When the green wound of an error is let alone, it soon rankles, and quickly grows into the old sore of an heresy. But how comes the apostle to say, there *must* be heresies? what necessity is there for them? *Ans.* 1. Negatively; there is not an absolute necessity for them on God's part, or a necessity of his making; but a conditional necessity, or a necessity *ex hypothesi*, which must needs be, if such a thing be granted before: as supposing the sun be risen, it must be day. Thus here, upon supposition of the pride, vain-glory, envyings, strife, and contentions, which are amongst the members of the church; upon supposition of the craft and subtilty, malice and malignity, of Satan, the church's grand enemy; upon supposition of God's permission, that Satan and wicked men should act according to their corrupt affections and inclinations; heresies must and will be. Note farther, That the reason here assigned for the necessity of heresies is not causal, but eventual: not causal, as if the wisdom of God did design there should be heresies for this end, that they who are approved of him should be made manifest; but rather eventual; as if the apostle had said, "Hence it will come to pass, that they who are approved will be made manifest."

20 When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lord's supper.

As if he had said, "True, ye Corinthians,

when ye come together to one place, ye pretend to eat the Lord's supper; but though you eat it, yet ye do not eat it as ye ought to do; you perform the material part of the action, but you do not partake of it solemnly and religiously, according to the divine institution; this therefore is not to eat the Lord's supper." Learn thence, That a duty not done as it ought to be done, is not done at all in the account of Christ. Sermons may be heard, and yet accounted no sermons; prayers made, yet not made; sacraments received, yet not received; alms given, yet not given; because not done in manner and form as God required. A gracious heart will look not barely at the matter of the duty, but also at the manner of performance, and take care not only that he hears, but how he hears.

21 For in eating, every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

Here our apostle begins to reprove the Corinthians for the abuses found in their love-feasts. These love-feasts were founded on no express command in holy writ, but only on the custom of the church, who immediately before receiving the sacrament used to have a great feast, to which all the poor were invited at the charges of the rich, as an expression of their perfect love and charity one towards another. Now in these feasts of charity they did not observe due order and decency: for *every one*, that is, every party and faction, being come to the place of the assembly, did presently sit down and eat what they had bought, in the company of their own party, not minding or regarding others; whereupon this holy feast of charity was neither celebrated at the same time by all, nor with that unanimity and concord which it was designed to represent: whilst the poor were excluded, and sent home hungry, the rich were feasted, and drank to some degree of excess, which is here called drunkenness; *one is hungry, and another is drunken.* Behold what great irregularities and disorders are here found in the church of Corinth! Who can expect a church without spot in this imperfect state! God has left these miscarriages upon record, not for imitation, but for our caution.

22 What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not.

A twofold sense and interpretation is given of these words, Some paraphrase

them thus; What! must you make the house of God the place of your feasting! If you be disposed for mirth and jollity, have you not houses wherein you may do it with more privacy, and less offence! Or despise you the church of God! Do you undervalue and thus profane and unhallow the place set apart for God's worship and service, by converting it into a common banqueting-house! Thus many expound it of the material church; and their opinion is favoured by the antithesis and opposition betwixt church and houses; *Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise you the church of God?* Learn, That holy duties, pious and public, are to be performed in the church or house of God. Duties pious, but not public, better suit the closet than the church. Duties public, but not pious, more befit a Guild-hall or Town-house, than the house of God. Others by the church of God understand the spiritual church, the poor members of Jesus Christ, and render the words thus; "*What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in, if need be, before you come? Or despise you those poor Christians, who are members of the church of Christ as well as you, and put to shame them that have not what you eat and drink, by excluding them out of your company for their poverty-sake? For since God adopts them into his family, and admits them unto his table, you ought not to exclude them from this feast of charity, which was originally designed for the poor's relief.*" Learn, He that despiseth the poor, despiseth the church of God; yea, despiseth Christ himself; as he that pincheth the little toe paineth the whole body, so the disgracing the poor members of Christ is a despising of the whole church. In these love-feasts the poor were the most proper, and should have been the most principal guests; but, alas! the rich gorged themselves plentifully, whilst the poor stobd and looked on hungry. Yet observe, lastly, With what lenity and mildness the apostle reproves these great disorders in the church at Corinth: *Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.* It was the first time he had told them of their faults; therefore he doth it gently, in hope of amendment. Learn thence, That though ministers must not commend but reprove people, when they do ill, yet they must use mildness, especially at their first reproofing of a sin. Some observe, That God so blessed the mild severity of St. Paul, that the Corinthians, upon the writing of this first epistle, reformed all their abuses: which they gather hence, because no fault is taxed in the second epistle, which was reformed in the first.

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the *same* night in which he was betrayed, took bread: 24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle, for reforming those abuses which were crept into the church amongst them, relating to the holy sacrament, reduces them to the first institution of that sacred ordinance; *I have delivered unto you what I have received of the Lord.* Mark, the apostle, did receive and deliver, but not institute and appoint, this venerable ordinance. Had he not received, he had wanted authority; and had he not delivered what he received, he had wanted integrity. Observe, 2. The author of this institution, the *Lord Jesus*. To institute sacraments is an act of Christ's regal power and royal authority. The church has no power to appoint, but only to execute and administer what Christ appoints. Observe, 3. The time of the institution: the same night in which he was betrayed. It is a night much to be remembered, in which he settles an ordinance in the church for the confirmation and consolation of his people to the end of the world. Lord! what an evidence was here of thy tender care and affectionate concern for thy church and people, in spending so much of that little, very little time thou hadst left, upon their account! Observe, 4. The sacramental elements, or the commemorative, significative, and instructive signs: and they are bread and wine, shadowing forth the body and blood of the crucified Jesus. Where note, St. Paul calls it bread five times over, which Christ calls his own body, because it was a sign and representation of his body; not his real body, for then Christ ate his own body whilst he was alive, his disciples devouring that body over night which hung upon the cross next morning, with a thousand such absurdities which the doctrine of transubstantiation carries along with it. Observe, 5. The ministerial actions: *the breaking of the bread, and blessing*

of the cup. The bread must be broken, to represent the breaking of Christ's body upon the cross, which comprehended all the sufferings of his human nature, all which were consummated in his crucifixion; and this broken bread must be taken and eaten by us, to intimate that all his breakings, bruising, and woundings, both in soul and body, were for our sins, and for our benefits, and that the sole intention of all his sufferings was for us. Wine also is poured forth, because as no liquor like wine doth cheer a sad and drooping spirit, in like manner nothing doth so glad and cheer the soul as faith in a crucified Saviour. That spiritual life which a soul is raised to, by the death of Christ, is a life of the greatest delight and joy which we can conceive. Observe, 6. The great design and end of this institution: *Do it in remembrance of me*, or for a memorial of me. Christ knew how apt our base hearts would be to forget him, amidst such a throng of sensible objects as we here converse with: and how much our forgetfulness of him and his sufferings would tend to our prejudice and disadvantage; and therefore doth he appoint this ordinance to bring him to remembrance. Observe, 7. The strict mandate or charge given for the frequent celebration of this ordinance; *Do this as oft as ye drink it*; that is, do it often. We can no more live and thrive without our spiritual, than we can without our corporal food; as the body must be often fed, so the soul must have its frequent repast. Observe, 8. The reason assigned for the frequent celebration of this ordinance: *For as oft as ye do this, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*: that is, by frequenting this ordinance we commemorate the death of Christ during his absence from us. As the end of the ordinance was to be a standing memorial, so the obligation that lies upon all Christians to observe it is perpetual. Christians are, by this ordinance, to represent the sacrificing of Christ for their sins, till he come again in glory. Learn from the whole, 1. That the sacrament of the Lord's supper was instituted by Christ as a standing memorial of his death and sufferings for us. Here we ought to remember the painfulness of his death, the meritoriousness of his death, the voluntariness of his death, the acceptableness of his death to God, and the advantageousness of his death to ourselves. And the manner how we should remember Christ and his death in the sacrament is various; with judgment and understanding, with reverence and humility, with sorrow and grief of heart for our sins; yet with joy and thankfulness for the suf-

ferings of a Saviour, with faith and affection, with love and affection, with resolutions for a new and better obedience. Learn, 2. That the command of Christ lays it as a law upon, and makes it the standing duty of, all Christians, to commemorate his death at his holy table. *Do this in remembrance of me*. Here it deserves our notice what kind of command this is; it is a sovereign and supreme command: it is a positive and express command: it is a permanent and lasting command; it is the command of a Saviour, yea, of a dying Saviour; it is a command of love; it is such a command as, if we duly observe, will be a blessed means to enable us to observe all the commands of God better. Lastly, It is such a command, as whoever lives in the wilful neglect of it, cannot be called a Christian, but will be treated by Christ at the great day as an enemy and despiser of his dying love. Learn, 3. That it is a Christian's duty not barely to do this, but to do it often: frequent communicating is a great duty. The primitive Christians received every Lord's day, yea, it is believed oftener than every Lord's day. This is agreeable to the nature of the ordinance, which is a spiritual repast, banquet, and feast, and therefore to be received frequently. It is also agreeable to the Author of the ordinance; it is a feast of God's own providing; therefore to neglect it is to fly in the face of God: it is agreeable to the end of the ordinance, which is to renew our covenant, and that cannot be done too often.

27 Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

The apostle having in the foregoing verses declared the original institution of the Lord's supper, he comes now to instruct the Corinthians in the right use of it; and to excite them to a due regard in their approaches to it, he acquaints them with the great danger of an unworthy receiving of it; *Whosoever shall eat this bread, &c. unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*. Quest. 1. What is it not to eat and drink unworthily? Ans. (1.) To receive the sacrament with many doubts and fears, with a weak faith, with a trembling hand and fearful heart, all this may be, and yet the person not receive unworthily. (2.) The want of perfect holiness, and a complete freedom from sin, doth not denominate a person an unworthy receiver; for this ordinance was not instituted for angels, but for men; to make

sinful men good, and good men better. (3.) Backwardness to the duty, deadness and dulness in the duty, when involuntary and lamented, makes not a person an unworthy receiver. *Quest. 2.* What is it to eat and drink unworthily? *Ans. (1.)* It is to receive out of custom, not out of conscience; for company's sake, not for the command's sake; because the law of man enjoins it, not because the law of Christ requires it. (2.) It is to receive without such a disposition of mind, such a preparation of heart, such reverence and devotion, as ought therein to be exercised; to receive without knowledge, without repentance, without faith, without resolution for a sincere obedience, without sincere reconciliation to our neighbour. *Quest. 3.* What is it to be guilty of the body and blood of our Lord? *Ans. (1.)* It is an implicit approbation of the Jews' act in crucifying Christ. (2.) It is implicitly a jesting with the body and blood of Christ, a playing with the most tremendous things in the world. (3.) It is a crucifying the Son of God afresh: it is to stab the master of the feast at his own table, whilst he is treating us with the richest dainties.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.

Observe here, The duty required to prevent the danger of unworthy receiving, and that is, the great and necessary duty of examination. A metaphor taken from goldsmiths, who try the truth of their gold by the touch-stone, the purity of their gold by the fire, the weight of it by the scale. Observe, 2. The examinant, or person, performing this duty of examination: *Let a man*, that is, let every man. This stands in a double opposition: (1.) To our examining of others. (2.) To our resting in another's examination of us. Observe, 3. The frequency of this act; as often as we partake of the ordinance, so oft we should, if we have time, less or more, examine ourselves: *Let him examine, and so let him eat.* Let him pass through one duty to another. Learn hence, That it is the special duty, and ought to be the singular care and endeavour, of all those that desire safely and comfortably to approach the table of the Lord, to examine themselves before they come: to examine their right unto it, and to examine their fitness for it.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

What it is to eat and drink unworthily, we find explained before, at ver. 27. Note here farther, That many persons of honest hearts, but weak heads, have sadly misunderstood the words of St. Paul, about unworthy receiving, thinking that such an excess of reverence and preparation is required, that either they dare not come at all, or they come with so much dread and fear upon their minds, that they are more terrified than comforted. Observe farther, The unworthy person eats and drinks judgment; that is, temporal judgment will follow him in this life; and, without repentance, eternal damnation in the next. Yet note, It is judgment to himself that receives not to another that receives with him. If a wicked man's presence at the sacrament pollutes the ordinance to a worthy receiver, then Christ and his eleven apostles were defiled by the company of Judas at the passover; for at that he certainly was, and, as many think, at the Lord's supper also. Learn, then, that unworthy receivers of the Lord's supper do contract great guilt, and incur great danger, to themselves. The design of the apostle in these two last verses is this, that we should not sinfully omit the duty, because of the command; nor carelessly undertake it, because of the threatened judgment.

30 For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

For this cause; that is, for profaning the sacrament, and not discerning the Lord's body at the Lord's table; for not approaching it as a feast of love designed equally for the benefit of all his members, and to knit them in the closest bonds of unity and friendship each to other: therefore it was that many were visited with sickness and weakness, and some with death; which being called *sleep*, some have charitably concluded from thence that they were pious persons in the main; for the death of the wicked is hardly called sleep anywhere in scripture; and if so, then we learn that the holiness of an ordinance, or the habitual holiness of any person who approaches an ordinance, will not exempt from God's displeasure, and the infliction of temporal judgments here in this life, if they do not by actual preparation sanctify the name of God in the duties and ordinances of his worship. Besides an habitual, there is required an actual preparation, in all those that will safely and comfortably approach to God in holy duties; without it we shall meet with a blow, instead of a blessing.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

That is, if we would examine, try, censure, and sentence ourselves, and so come to the Lord's table as penitent believers, with a purity of aim, and a sincere intention; we should thereby escape the castigatory punishments, and condemnatory sentence, of God. Learn hence, That as it is our duty often to examine and judge ourselves, so self-judging in particular, before we approach the Lord's table, will preserve us from the judgment and condemnation of God; we must first summon, then examine, then convict and try, then sentence and condemn ourselves, and all this in hopes of being absolved and acquitted by God, acting our faith upon his free mercy, and the Redeemer's satisfaction.

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

Observe here, 1. The nature of those judgments, or afflictive evils, which do befall the children of God in this life: they are chastenings: *we are chastened of the Lord*. Chastenings belong properly to children who are wanton and ungovernable. *To be chastened* has a double aspect; first upon our privilege, it denotes our relation as children unto God our Father. Chastenings are a part of his children's portion; yet in that we are chastened, it taxes us with weakness; we are foolish, wanton, and unruly children, and therefore so long as we are here, must always go with a rod at our backs. Christ, who was also a Son, was chastened; *The chastisement of our peace was upon him*. But his were judiciary chastisements: God did not chastise him as a child, but as an enemy, as a malefactor, in our stead; as we must have been chastened, who were enemies and malefactors. Our chastenings are fatherly; Christ's judiciary. Observe, 3. The merciful design of God in the chastenings of his children: it is to prevent their condemnation: *We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world*. When therefore at any time we are under chastisement, in all we say or do, let us justify God and condemn ourselves, seeing his chastisements are designed to prevent our condemnation.

33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. 34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

Our apostle here concludes his discourse

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with an exhortation to the Corinthians, to take heed for time to come that all these fore-mentioned miscarriages may be rectified; that when they come together to eat the Lord's supper, and the love-feasts, they should tarry one for another, that they may all feed and feast together. And if any man pretend to be hungry, let him eat at home before he comes, lest by these irreverent actions he bring down the judgments of God upon himself. Lastly, he tells them, that as to other points of church order, he would determine them when he came among them; *The rest will I set in order when I come*. Such unchristian disorders may arise in the church as will require the presence and coming of an apostle to correct and reform them.

CHAP. XII.

NOW concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

Our apostle begins this chapter with the resolution of another case, concerning the nature and right use of spiritual gifts. Some that excelled in them, were proud of them, using them to vain ostentation: he therefore tells them he would not have them ignorant as touching spiritual gifts: not ignorant either of their Author from whence they came, the Holy Spirit of God; nor of their end and use, which is the benefit and edification of others. Gifts are for the good of others; but a man shall have the advantage and comforts of his own graces. Gifts are the gold which adorns the temple; but grace is the altar which sanctifies the gold. Lord! how many have gone laden with gifts to hell! how many have prophesied in thy name, and yet perished in thy wrath! How many cast devils out of others, who yet were cast to the devils themselves! How many wrought miracles, and did many wonderful works, who yet perished for evil workers! Lord! let me never build upon this bottom (gifts) for eternity; these may make me glorious in the eyes of men, but grace renders me precious in the sight of God.

2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle reminds the Corinthians of what they were in their heathenish state; namely, idolatrous Gentiles, serving *dumb idols*; for though the devil sometimes spake in and by the idols,

yet the idols themselves had mouths and spake not: and *they were carried away unto these dumb idols, even as they were led*; that is, as they were led by their idolatrous priests, who had nothing of this divine Spirit amongst them, which they, since their conversion from Gentilism to Christianity, had been made partakers of. Now from this description of idolaters, that they serve and worship dumb idols, we learn, what an absurd and unreasonable sin idolatry is; the worshipper is better than the god he worships: reasonable men worship unreasonable creatures; sensible men adore senseless stocks and stones; and they who can speak, invoke, and call upon dumb idols, that can neither speak nor hear. And yet how prone is the nature of man to idolatry and false worship; partly, because it is a worship of our own invention, and we are fond of what is of our own finding out, and setting up; and partly, because it is external and pompous, it courts the outward senses with glittering appearances; and men do naturally love and choose that for the object of their worship which may be seen, rather than that which is to be believed. As they walk by sight, and not by faith, so do they worship too: an invisible and unseen being is neither the object of their adoration, nor election and choice.

3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed; and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

The great difference that was then in the world, was about Jesus. Those that were led away by dumb idols, were taught by Satan to blaspheme, and say, upon the mention of our Saviour's name, *Jesus anathema*, *Jesus anathema*; that is, let Jesus be *anathema*, accursed, detested and destroyed, as the common odium of their gods. Now when the apostle says, such speak not by the Spirit of God, his meaning is, that they did it by the impulse and instinct of the devil, by the actings and instigation of the evil spirit, which ruled in those children of disobedience: on the other side, every one that believeth calleth Jesus Lord, and professeth faith in him. Now none says the apostle, can do this but by the Holy Ghost, that is, by his help and assistance. But it may be said, we read in scripture of many who were actuated by the unclean spirit, that yet called Jesus Lord, *Mark i. 23. Acts xvi. 17. Ans. 1.* These acknowledgments of Christ to be Lord, were either wrested from the devil,

and were a considerable part of his torment, or were overruled by God to advance the glory of Christ. But, 2. The apostle here speaks of such a calling Jesus Lord, as was accompanied with faith in him, and subjection to him. There is a double saying that Jesus is Lord; the one verbal, *Ore tenus*, with lip and tongue only, without the consent of the heart, or obedience of the life; the other actual, when we do with our whole souls own and acknowledge him, love and embrace him, obey and serve him, as Lord, and vote for his government and dominion over us. No man thus calleth Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost renewing and sanctifying him, assisting and enabling him so to do.

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of operations: but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

That is, there is a great variety and diversity of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Spirit from whence they all proceed and flow; and there are different administrations and offices in the church, but it is the same Lord who hath appointed all these offices; and there are diversities of operations performed by these officers in the church, but it is the same God who worketh in them all. Here gifts are ascribed to the Holy Ghost, administrations to the Lord Christ, and operations to God the Father; but in all these there are great diversities both of kinds and degrees; they differ in their nature, extent, and use. Thus it is with reference to spiritual gifts: but in the case of sanctifying graces it was far otherwise; these are all bestowed jointly, or not at all. God cannot give humility to one, purity to another, charity alone to a third; because there is such an inseparable union and alliance among the graces of the Spirit. (a concatenation of graces, as some call it,) that where one really is, there all the rest must be. Hence probably it is, why the whole of religion is sometimes expressed by one particular duty of it, sometimes by faith, sometimes by hope, sometimes by repentance, sometimes by charity; because the combination of these saving graces is such, that the mentioning of one implies and concludes all the rest.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8 For to one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom: to

another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; 9 To another faith, by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit; 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Observe here, how the apostle enumerates and reckons up the several sorts and kinds of spiritual gifts, which were at that time plentifully poured forth upon the ministers and members of the church of Christ, which begat astonishment and admiration; and of these extraordinary gifts our apostle reckons up nine sorts or kinds, which were found in the primitive church in his days, as they here follow: 1. One had the word of wisdom; that is, the revelation of the gospel, which is called the manifold wisdom of God: this was the gift of the apostles, to whom extraordinary measures of divine wisdom were first given, to reveal the mysteries of the gospel to the pagan world. 2. Another had the word of knowledge; that is, a special ability to interpret the mystical senses and veiled meanings of the scripture, and also to foretell remote and future things. Thus St. Paul told the centurion before the shipwreck, that not a man in the ship should be lost, *Acts* xvii: and Agabus foretold the famine, and St. Paul's imprisonment, *Acts* xi. 3. To another faith; by which some understand supernatural courage and confidence, with which God did endow them, when he called them to extraordinary sufferings or services; accordingly we read, in the Acts of the Apostles, with what invincible courage and resolution poor men appeared before the Jewish and heathen tribunals, and with what astonishing presence, both of body and mind, they bore the name of Jesus before the kings and people of the earth. Others by faith here understand miraculous faith, that is, a supernatural confidence, and firm assurance, wrought by the Holy Spirit in the minds of some, in the apostle's time, by which they were certain that they could do such and such a miracle before they undertook to do it; and the greatest apostle durst never undertake to do a miracle, but when he was assured by the Spirit that he could do it: and indeed it was requisite for Almighty God, by some secret preceding impression of mind, to let the teachers

of the gospel know when he would assist them in working miracles, lest they should attempt to work when they could not, and so discredit Christ's doctrine, their own authority, and dishonour the name of God: and therefore it is observable, that the gift of faith here is set immediately before the gift of healing and working miracles, because it consisted in an antecedent impulse to both. 4. The next miraculous gift is the gift of healing; that is, a power of curing all diseases both of body and mind, without the help of physic, through the name alone of Jesus Christ. 5. The gift of miracles; under which is comprehended the power of silencing and casting out devils, inflicting disease and death on the bodies of incorrigible sinners, as on Elymas and Ananias: also the more wonderful power in raising the dead. 6. The gift of prophecy; that is, (1.) The prediction or foreknowledge of things to come. Thus Agabus foretold by the Spirit a famine, *Acts* xii. and this gift was sometimes exercised by foretelling who would be fit persons to do God service in the church; thus, 1. *Tim.* i. 18. and iv. 14. According to the foregoing prophecies concerning thee, neglect not the gift that was given thee by prophecy. (2.) Others by prophecy understand preaching and expounding the scriptures by divine inspiration, praising God by inspired hymns and psalms, and also praying unto him in public assemblies by inspired prayers; for in the apostle's time there was a miraculous gift of preaching, praying, and singing, in which the Spirit did in an extraordinary manner assist some persons; which with other extraordinary gifts is long since ceased. 7. The gift of discerning spirits; that is, either, First, a power of quick and sure discerning, whether men pretending to the Spirit spake from God, or not; or a supernatural sagacity to discern between the impulses of satanical spirits, and divinely-inspired persons. Or, Secondly, a spirit of discerning whether such or such persons be best qualified for such an office in the church, and accordingly choosing them out for that work. Thus *Acts* xiii. 2, 3, the Holy Spirit in the prophet said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Or, lastly, by this power of discerning spirits, the apostles could tell very much of the inward purposes of men's hearts and thoughts; so Peter discerned the heart of Ananias, and the thoughts of Simon Magus. 8. The gift of tongues, that is, an ability to speak divers kinds of languages, unlearned and untaught. To which was added, 9. The gift of interpreting those languages: for

these two gifts did not always go together: some could speak divers languages, that could not interpret them; others could interpret them that could not speak them; for, say some, the gift of strange tongues was usually accompanied with such strange raptures, that the person affected could not use his understanding in an ordinary way, so as to interpret and explain his own inspirations, in the audience to which he spoke; which was the reason why the Spirit did usually reveal to others, who stood by, and understood not the inspired languages, the matter which was spoken. Thus are the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit enumerated by the apostle, which were bestowed upon the primitive church, whose infant state required all this extraordinary assistance; but as the church grew up, Almighty God, like a wise nurse, weaned her by degrees from these miraculous gifts, till at last arriving at her full stature, he left her, as parents leave their children when grown to be men, to subsist without these extraordinary helps and supplies.

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

Here our apostle acquaints us that the intent and design of God in giving these various gifts, was the profit and edification of his church, which he compares to a body that has many members; for though that one Spirit which distributes the gifts, could have given them all to the same person, yet to maintain a mutual dependence, and a charitable serviceableness of the members one among another, he gave to one one gift, to another another; by which means one member of the church would be obliged to take care of the rest. Behold here, how the wisdom of God has ordered the state of the church, like that of the natural body, to which the apostle elegantly compares the body of Christ, which is his church: *As the body hath many members, so also has Christ; that is, the church of Christ.* Now having assured them, that they were indeed members of one body, he tells them what it was that made them so, ver. 13. *For by one Spirit, says he, we are baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit; that is, by being baptized we are*

all made members of the body of Christ, and united one to another under him the head; and this, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, we are all one in Christ, who by baptism were admitted into the church; and this union of ours, one with another, is testified and declared by our communion at the Lord's table, which is here called a drinking into one Spirit. And whereas by baptism we are said by one Spirit to be baptized into one body, and at the Lord's supper are said to drink into one Spirit; we learn, that the grace of the Holy Spirit was given in baptism and in the Lord's supper to all the faithful, who do not receive unprofitable signs, but the quickening grace and Spirit of God, to make them living members of that one body.

14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, *Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?* 16 And if the ear shall say, *Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?* 17 If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling?

Our apostle here elegantly compares the state of the mystical body, the church, with that of the natural body. As the natural body is one, so is the mystical body; as the natural body is informed and animated with one spirit or soul, so the mystical body, the church, is animated by one and the same Spirit, received from our spiritual head, Christ Jesus, and communicated to all the members of his body, to give them life and motion. As the members of the natural body are not alike, but some superior, and others inferior in excellency, yet all of indispensable use; (for the wise God hath created no member of man's body in vain; but designed all for the mutual help and benefit of one another,) in like manner is it in the church, the mystical body; there are different gifts, different offices; some are superior and more excelling in gifts, others are of meaner abilities; yet all conduce to the good of the whole. One of inferior gifts must not account himself useless, (for every one that cannot be excellent may yet be useful,) for if so, what would become of the church! Therefore there must be different gifts and offices for different uses. But every one must employ his gift, and perform his office, according to

the nature of it, for the service of the whole. Learn hence, 1. That several men have their several gifts, as it pleaseth the gift-giving Spirit to give unto them. Learn, 2. That such as have the meanest talent, either of gifts or graces, ought not to esteem themselves, or be esteemed by others, as useless or unserviceable; but to employ their talent, though ever so small, for the service and benefit of the whole church.

18 But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20 But now are *they* many members, yet but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 Nay much more, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.

As if the apostle had said, Whereas our wise Creator, who made the body of man, has appointed all the members of that body for divers uses and offices, and also appointed the order in which every member shall stand; that the head shall be uppermost to guide the body, the foot lowermost to bear the body. In like manner our gracious Redeemer has appointed to the several members of his church distinct offices in his church. And as the principal members of the body, the eye and hand, do need the less principal; so the rulers, pastors, and wisest members of the church, do need even those weak and inferior Christians whom the world makes small account of. The eye, that is, the man of great understanding, cannot say to the hand, the person employed in lesser services, I have no need of you; nor again the head, that is, the person placed in the highest dignity in the church, cannot say to the feet, the person employed in the lowest offices of the church, I have no need of you. Therefore the superior members of the church must not pride it over the inferior, nor the most knowing Christians despise the less knowing as unuseful and unprofitable; but as fellow-members, jointly endeavour the mutual benefit and advantage of one another.

23 And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness. 24 For our comely *parts* have no need:

but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked: 25 That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Still our apostle proceeds in that elegant comparison betwixt the members of the body natural and the body mystical; showing, that as there are some members in the natural body that are less honourable, and some that are more honourable; and whereas we put more abundant honour upon the less honourable members by a decent covering and modest adorning of them, but upon our comely parts, such as the face, we put no covering, being comely enough of itself, and lacking no artificial beauty; in like manner all the members of the mystical body ought to be instructed that the meanest offices in the church, and the meanest members of the church, who have least gifts, are as well of that spiritual body, the church, as those that have more excellent offices and gifts: and as the meaner must not envy the more excellent, so neither must the more excellent despise the meaner, but put a due value and respect upon one another. For practising of which duty, a double reason is here assigned: 1. That there may be no schism in the body, but the members have the same care for, and regard to, one another; if the members of the natural body should strive among themselves, the whole body would come to ruin by schism; so great mischief would arise to the church, the mystical body, by divisions and dissensions amongst the particular members of it. 2. Because there ought to be a sympathy between the members of the mystical body, as there is betwixt the members of the natural body. There is a fellow-feeling with each other, both of joy and grief, in and among the natural members: they all rejoice and mourn with one another: if one member be pinched, the whole body is pained. Thus all the mystical members of Christ's body, the church, ought to have the same common interest, the same common concern, the same common care, and the same mutual sympathy, with each other, both in weal and woe.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Our apostle having thus finished his elegant and excellent comparison between the members of the natural, and those of the mystical body; he comes now to make a particular and close application of it to the believing Corinthians, whom he acknowledges to be a part of the mystical body of Christ; and that it is their duty to carry themselves towards their fellow-members as the members of the body natural do towards each other, who are evermore solicitous for the good of one another. Now, says he, *Ye are the members of Christ*; as if he had said, Thus must it be with you who are the several members of Christ's church, which is his body. From the whole of this comparison, with the apostle's application of it, we learn, 1. That as there can be no natural body without divers members, so no mystical body without diversity of gifts and offices. 2. That as the more inferior members of the natural body are as truly members as the most noble; and as necessary and serviceable to the body as the other; so are inferior Christians as much the members of Christ's body, and in their place as useful and necessary, as other members of the church which are more excellent in spiritual gifts. Learn, 3. That as all the members of the natural body are placed and disposed according to the wisdom and pleasure of Almighty God; in like manner the members of Christ's mystical body are, by the unerring wisdom of God, placed in the station and condition in the church in which he has set them, and accordingly they ought to be satisfied with it, and endeavour to be useful in it. Learn, 4. That as there is no division in the members of the natural body, but all the members take care of, and are employed for, the good of the whole; so ought matters to be managed in the body mystical, that there be no divisions nor separate interests in it, but they should mutually regard the common interests of one another, sympathizing, sorrowing, and rejoicing together. O happy day! when the interests of all parties, and private concerns, shall give place to public interests.

28 And God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Our apostle having in the beginning of the chapter reckoned up the divers gifts which God had variously bestowed upon the church, here in the close of the chapter he reckons up the particular officers that he thought fit to place in his church. 1. *Apostles*; persons sent forth immediately by

Christ, to lay the foundation of Christian churches, and upon whom the care of all the churches lay. 2. *Prophets*; or persons immediately inspired with the knowledge of future things. 3. *Teachers*; such as labour in the word and doctrine, either as itinerary preachers, going from place to place, or as settled, fixed ministers in the church, expounding the scriptures to the people. 4. *Miracles*; that is, some persons endued with an extraordinary power to work miracles, for convincing infidels, and confirming believers. 5. *Gifts of healing*; such persons as had a power conferred upon them to heal diseases, without the help of physic, in an extraordinary way. 6. *Helps*; deacons which took care of the poor, and assisted the church in the distribution of her charity; and also assisted in holy things, particularly in baptizing, and administering the Lord's supper. 7. *Governments*; the rulers of the church and spiritual guides. 8. *Diversities of tongues*; that is, persons enabled to speak divers languages, in order to the farther spreading of the gospel without the help of study. Behold here the wisdom of God in this various distribution of gifts and offices in his church: all which, as they are designed by him, so ought they to be managed by her, for the general good of the whole, without either pride or haughtiness on the one hand, or envy and emulation on the other.

29 *Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? 30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret!*

The force of the apostle's argument lies thus: As the natural body, to which he had before alluded, cannot be all eye, nor all ear, nor all hand, nor all foot; in like manner in the mystical body, the church, all cannot govern, prophesy, teach, work miracles, heal diseases; but one has this gift, and another that; one has this office in the church, and another that; all which are to be employed and improved for the common good of the church, and mutual benefit of each other.

30 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

He concludes the chapter with this advice, that they covet, and desire the *best*; that is, the most useful and excellent gifts, the most beneficial and edifying gifts, such as are most advantageous to the church; yet withal intimating to them, that though there be an excellency in gifts, yet there is

a greater excellency in grace, particularly in the grace of love. Charity, or love to God and our neighbour, is more excellent than a load of gifts, though very-extraordinary, though supernatural and miraculous. *Yet show I unto you a more excellent way*: that is, a more excellent way of ministering to the welfare of the church, and of edifying your own souls, even by true Christian love one towards another. Learn hence, That as the sanctifying graces of the Holy Spirit are more excellent than the miraculous and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, so it is the Christian's duty to be much more covetous and desirous of them; for when gifts vanish away, the habits of grace shall never fail, but abide for ever, particularly the grace of love, which shall not only accompany us to heaven, but in heaven; where, from a small and little spark, it shall be improved into a seraphic and never-failing flame.

CHAP. XIII.

Our apostle had in the foregoing chapter very copiously set forth the nature, and excellency, and usefulness of those gifts which were found amongst the ministers and members of the church of Corinth in his time. Now lest they should trust too much to any of the forementioned gifts, either of tongues or miracles, which alas! a man may have, and perish eternally; he proceeds in this chapter to set forth the transcendent excellency of the graces of the Holy Spirit above the most exalted and admired gifts; and, in particular, the superlative excellency of the grace of charity, that is, the unfeigned love of God and our neighbour; which is the noble subject of this chapter now before us.

THOUGH I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Here our apostle begins a comparison between gifts and graces, and shows how much more excellent and desirable the saving graces of the Spirit are, than all those pompous and miraculous gifts, in which there is no real excellency, and nothing for which we should desire them, but only upon the score of usefulness and serviceableness to the church. And he instances first in the gifts of tongues: *Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels*; that is, though I had the gift of tongues, or speaking divers languages in the highest measure and most exalted degree; could I preach and pray like an angel, discourse and talk beyond the rate of any mortal man, and have not the grace of love and charity; alas! what is all this to God, who is not taken with a noisy sound, as children are with a musical instrument! Behold here, that the tongues of men or angels could have said nothing more plain or emphatical, to show how much more excellent the

saving graces of the Spirit are than miraculous gifts, which commend us not to God, render us not like God, nor any ways qualify us for the enjoyment of him, giving him no intrinsic worth, or inherent excellency. They only proclaim God's goodness towards us, but are no ways evidential of any goodness in us towards him. Gifts are like the gold which adorns the temple, but grace is like the altar which sanctifies the gold.

2 And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

Farther, Suppose I had the spirit of prophecy, and could speak by inspiration of things present, and things to come, and could understand deep and difficult points in God's word and works, what is this more than *Balaam* had! And suppose I have all faith, that is, the highest degree of miraculous faith, so that I could remove mountains; yet this, severed from charity, or the predominant love of God and our neighbour, is all nothing. And *I am nothing*, that is, nothing worth in the sight of God. Observe here, That miraculous faith may be severed from charity, but justifying faith cannot, which always worketh by love; and wherever that grace is found, it gives value and acceptance to all other graces. Faith without charity is but a dead assent; hope without charity is but like a tympany, the bigger it grows, the more dangerous it proves; and the most diffusive alms-giving, without love, is but a sacrifice to vanity.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Observe here, 1. That alms may be given without true love to God, or our neighbour for God's sake; they may be given out of mere natural pity to the poor, out of a desire to be well thought of, and well spoken of by men, out of an opinion of merit, and obliging God, or from some other cause, which includes not love either to God or man; and wherever they are thus given, they profit nothing to salvation. The Greek word for feeding the poor here, signifies to divide victuals in several pieces, and so distribute it amongst the poor. Lord! what a consideration is this, that a man may do all the external works of mercy, even the highest and most

transcendent works, and yet want true love to God and his neighbour! Observe, 2. That as alms may be given, so martyrdom may be undergone, without charity. *If I give my body to be burned*; that is, if I have so much fortitude and courage as to lay down my life for Christ and his truth, which is such an high expression of my obedience to him as angels are not capable of performing, yet, without charity, burning is but a vain-glorious blaze; and instead of sealing the truth with our blood, we seal but our own shame and folly. Observe, 3. The apostle says not, If I be burnt, persecuted, and put to death by others: but if I give myself to be burned, if I voluntarily and freely offer up myself, not to imprisonment only, but to death itself, yea, to the most terrible kind of death, *burning*; yet if all this be not from a right principle and sincere end, if all this be without true love to God, and his glory, church, and truth, it will avail nothing to salvation. Learn hence, That no kind of external sufferings, though ever so grievous, either for the truth of Christ indeed, or for that which a man's conscience judges to be the truth of Christ, is a sure and infallible sign of a gracious state: a man may suffer for truth, but not for truth's sake, only for interest's sake; he may suffer from a natural strength and stoutness of spirit, and not from a spiritual fortitude wrought in him by the Spirit of God. Ah, Lord! how miserable is it to be burnt with fire here for Christ; and to hear him say afterward, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!* It is indeed a great matter to suffer for Christ, but much greater to suffer with such a disposition of heart as Christ requires.

4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

Here the apostle enters upon the description and commendation of the grace and duty of charity, and declares several excellent effects and properties of it; namely, *It suffereth long, and is kind*; that is, the charitable man is kind to all, patient towards all; he can bear injuries and reproaches very long, without either desiring or endeavouring to revenge them. *It envieth not*; that is, he envieth neither the power, nor profit, nor preferment, nor applause, nor precedency, of any man; but is well pleased with the happiness of every man, and laments their misfortunes. *Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up*; that is, it suppresses all self-applauding and admiring thoughts, all arrogance in

assuming to ourselves, and undervaluing of others.

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil:

That is, charity, or true love to our neighbour, will restrain us from all uncomely deportment towards him; it will not suffer us to do an ill or indecent thing to any one; it breaks not forth into violent and ungovernable passions upon any provocations, how just soever, how great soever. *Seeketh not her own*; that is, her own praise, profit, or pleasure; it seeketh it not inordinately, it seeketh it not injuriously, either in the neglect of others, or to the hurt of others. Charity is not selfish, but generous. *It is not easily provoked*; that is, charity is not provoked readily to think, speak, or act, unduly, by small injuries or occasions; but beareth, forbeareth, and forgiveth. *Thinketh no evil*; that is, of any person groundlessly, but construes and interprets every thing in the best sense; for lightly to take up an evil report of our neighbour, to think or suspect, much more to believe and report, any evil of him, without sufficient evidence against him, is a violation of the law of charity.

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Charity rejoices not in any evil done, either, 1. By ourselves, in the commission or after-contemplation of it; or, 2. By others. Lord, how sad is it when it becomes matter of mirth and sport, to see another stab at once the Christian name, and his own soul! Or, 3. It rejoices not in any evil done to others; charity suffers no man to be pleased or delighted with any deceit or falsehood spoken of or done to others, or with any ill stories or malicious insinuations concerning them, or in any calamity befalling them. *But rejoiceth in the truth*; that is, 1. Charity is so far from rejoicing either in the falls or misfortunes of others, that it rejoices when the truth and innocency, the righteousness and equity, of any person or cause is made evident and manifest. A good man rejoices when he sees any suspected for, or charged with, iniquity, upon due examination cleared and acquitted. Or, 2. *Rejoiceth in the truth*; that is, in men's loving truth, doing justly, and living righteously, according to the rule of truth, the gospel. Oh! what a complacency and inward pleasure doth it beget in a good man's mind, when he beholds truth and righteousness, piety and goodness, prevailing in the world!

7 Beareth all things, believeth all

things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity or love has strong shoulders to bear wrongs and injuries with patience, though very hard and grievous to be borne, without returning evil for evil: it will enable us to forbear one another in love, and not cease to be kind, notwithstanding provocations. *Believeth all things*; that is, charity inclines a man to believe the best of his neighbour, till the contrary appears; it interprets every thing in the best sense, and makes the fairest construction of every man's case and condition. Not that a charitable man is a credulous man, and can believe whatever he pleases; but he believeth all things, so far as either reality or probability, so far as truth or appearance of truth, will encourage him to do it. A charitable man is very willing to believe that things are meant as they are spoken, and intended as they are done. Oh, how uncharitable then, and unjust, are they who believe all is ill, when they know nothing ill; and think and speak ill of them, in whom they never saw any thing but what was good! It is not sufficient that we do not judge our neighbour maliciously, but we must not judge him ignorantly; it is an injurious and unworthy jealousy, when a person's actions are fair, to suspect his intentions. *Hopeth all things*; that is, it is the genius of charity, and the character of love, to hope the best of persons and things, so far as there is any ground of hope; yea, though they carry in them some cause and colour of suspicion: it inclines us still to hope the best concerning men's intentions and actions; and if our brother be bad at present, not to despair of his amendment, but endeavour his reformation by all proper means. *Endureth all things*; that is, it puts up with wrongs and injuries, without desiring, much less endeavouring, to revenge them; it causes us to endure provocation with much patience, and extinguishes all inclinations to revenge. Some will conceal their anger, but seek revenge: their malice is like slow poison, that does not discover violent symptoms, but destroys life insensibly. Others have such fierce passions, that they strike fire out of the least provocations; they inflame their resentments, by considering every circumstance that will exasperate their spirits: but *charity beareth all things, endureth all things*.

8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge,

it shall vanish away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

Charity never faileth. Holy love is an everlasting quality and employment; it shall not fail at death, as other graces do, but be perfected at death. Repentance should accompany us to the gates of heaven, but repentance ceases for ever in heaven; for no need of repentance where there is entire innocence. Faith is swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition; but love is then and there in its exaltation. Thus *charity never faileth*, but all other gifts will fail; prophesying, languages, sciences, and all artificial knowledge, will cease for ever; knowledge itself in heaven shall vanish away. But how vanish! The meaning is, that such knowledge as we have now shall vanish then; that imperfect knowledge we have now will cease and be useless then. Our present knowledge is attained with much labour and study; but it shall be no more difficult to know in heaven, than it is for the eye to open and see; the beautiful face of truth shall in a moment be unveiled to us in heaven, and the curtain drawn away by the hand of God, which interposed between us and the light. Again: knowledge of so imperfect a degree, as now it is of, shall vanish away: here we know what we know by divine revelation, but in part; and we prophesy by inspiration, but in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

As the imperfect twilight is done away by the opening of the perfect day; so at death, when that which is perfect takes place, then that which was imperfect shall be done away. Blessed be God for the hopes of that blessed place and state, where all imperfections shall cease, especially the imperfection of our knowledge. Alas! here all that we know, either of the word or works of God, is but a part, a little part; and blessed be God that this perfect state doth not succeed the imperfect one after a long interval, (at the resurrection and re-union of the body,) but the imperfect state of the soul immediately is done away by the coming of the perfect one; the glass is laid by as useless, when we come to see face to face, and eye to eye. O happy and vast difference between the Christian's present and future state! True, he now begins to know; he knows in part here; but verily what he here knows is little of what he should know, little of that he might know, little of that others know, little of that he desires to

know, and little of that he shall know, when he comes to heaven; then all imperfections *shall be done away, when that which is perfect is come.*

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Here the apostle compares the Christian's imperfect state of knowledge and holiness in this life to a state of childhood; his perfect state of holiness and happiness in heaven to a state of manhood. As a child conceives, thinks, and speaks, of things suitable to his childish state; but when he comes to manly perfection, and to the full use and exercise of his reason, he then puts away childish conceptions and things: thus it is with the best of us in this life; like children we conceive and think, we discourse and speak, of spiritual things, in a confused and imperfect manner; but when we arrive at our state of manly perfection in heaven, we shall have knowledge and all other graces perfected. Learn hence, That Christians must stay for perfect knowledge till they come to maturity and ripeness of age; children must not expect to know what men know. Solomon's knowledge on earth, so famously celebrated, will be but ignorance, compared with the knowledge and enlargements which the saints have in heaven; there in natural things they shall be exact philosophers, in spiritual things complete divines; all dark scriptures shall be clear to them, all the knotty intrigues of providence wisely resolved: in a word, there they shall know God himself perfectly, though they can never know him to perfection.

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part: but then shall I know even as also I am known.

As if the apostle had said, Now in our minority we see divine revelations, as the prophets did of old, in a dark enigmatical manner, and by symbolical representations of things upon the fancy, as in a glass; but then in the adult state of the church we shall see them after the Mosaical manner, in a way more accommodated to human nature, and as it were face to face: we shall see clearly, immediately, not by reflection, but by intuition. These adverbs, *now* and *then*, distinguish the twofold state of gracious souls; and show what they are whilst confined to the body, and what

they shall be when emancipated and freed from the body, that clog of mortality which now hangs upon them. Observe here, 1. That our imperfect knowledge of God is set forth by seeing in a glass, because it is a weak and imperfect vision; a glass gives but a weak and languid representation of the face that is seen in it; and because it is a vanishing and transient vision, a man having looked in a glass, presently forgets what he saw there: and because it is no immediate sight, but *mediante speculo*, by the glass of his word and ordinances we see and understand something of God's nature and will; though after all our searchings here to find out what God is, we rather know what he is not, than are able to declare what he is. Observe, 2. That such as have seen God here, as in a glass, in the glass of his ordinances and providence, in the glass of his word and works, shall see him face to face, and fix their eye upon him in heaven to all eternity: when once the pious soul is unsheathed from the body, it glistens gloriously; as soon as the cage is open, this bird soars aloft, and sings melodiously. It is death's office to beat down the partition-wall, a gross, earthly body; and then the glorified soul shall have a clear and perfect vision, an immediate and possessive vision, a satisfying and soul-transforming vision, a permanent and eternal vision, of the holy and blessed God, which the apostle here calls *seeing face to face*. Observe, 3. How St. Paul in the latter words of the verse gives us a plainer expression of that which before he had spoken more darkly and obscurely: *Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as also I am known.* Where note, How the apostle changes the person: before it was, *we see through a glass darkly*: here it is, *I know in part*. He had included himself before in the word *we*: but he doth it more apparently in saying, *I. Now I know in part*. When so great an apostle acknowledges the imperfection of his knowledge, who can, who dare, boast of the largeness of his understanding? Note farther, The apostle's saying, *Now I know*, intimates, that he had begun his acquaintance with God here, which he expected should be improved and perfected in heaven; he that knows not God in part here, shall never know him face to face in glory; heaven is a place of perfection indeed, but nothing is perfected there, that was not begun here; no knowledge, no holiness, will be consummated there, which did not commence and begin here. Observe, 4. When the apostle says, *We shall know even as we are known*: he means, that we shall know God as really

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and truly, though not so fully and comprehensively, as he knows us; we shall know him in his nature and attributes; then and there will his wonderful clemency be sweetly displayed, his exact justice visibly demonstrated, his perfect wisdom clearly unfolded, all the knotty intrigues of providence wisely resolved, all the mysterious depths of divine counsels fully discovered, to the delightful satisfaction of the admiring and adoring soul, who shall then see as it is seen, and know as it is known.

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

The design of the apostle in these words is, 1. To inform the Corinthians, that the sanctifying graces of faith, hope, and charity, are far to be preferred before all the fore-mentioned extraordinary gifts of prophecy, miracles, tongues, healing the sick, and raising the dead, not excepted. The least degree of sanctifying grace from the Holy Spirit, is to be preferred, with respect to ourselves, before the largest measure of extraordinary gifts which are wholly for the good and benefit of others. 2. As our apostle had compared gifts and graces together before, so he compares graces amongst themselves now. Faith, hope, and charity, are set in competition, and the preference given to the last; partly with respect to its present excellency, for charity is the end, to which faith and hope are but the means; and partly with respect to its future duration. Faith and hope will vanish with this life; faith will end in sight, and hope in enjoyment; but charity will never be outdated, but last and flourish when we come to heaven, and be a special ingredient in, and a considerable part of, our happiness there, which consists in the rapturous contemplation of divine love; in loving, praising, admiring, and adoring God, our great Creator, and in loving all whom he loves, and that eternally. Learn, 1. That faith, hope, and love, are abiding graces; they do and must keep house, not only in the church-militant in general, but in the soul of every member of the church-militant in particular. Learn, 2. That of all these graces, charity is the greatest and most excellent, 1. In regard of its extent, reaching to God, angels, and men. 2. In regard of its use, extending to the good of others; whereas faith and hope are particular and private graces. 3. In regard of perfection, as rendering us more like to God. 4. In regard of duration: farewell faith and hope, when we come to heaven; but welcome love. Therefore the greatest of these is charity.

Our apostle having in the twelfth chapter acquainted the Corinthians with the wonderful diversity and disparity of spiritual gifts, which the wisdom of God saw then fit to bestow upon the church for the propagation and confirmation of Christianity, and farther declared, that the intent and design of them was no other than the common and universal good; in the thirteenth chapter he recommends to them, and admirably deciphers before them, that great and noble grace of charity, which will render us eminent and useful in the world, which sets off all other gifts and endowments whatsoever, and directs us how to manage them to the best advantage. And here he begins this fourteenth chapter now before us, with a persuasive to follow and pursue so incomparable a grace and virtue with the utmost eagerness and vigour, and not to give over till we have perfectly attained it; for thus he speaks:

FOLLOW after charity, and desire spiritual gifts; but rather that ye may prophecy.

Observe here, 1. The apostle propounds to the Corinthians a threefold object: *charity, spiritual gifts, and prophecy*. Charity has the precedency and pre-eminency; the apostle not only prefers it before all other gifts, but before the most useful and excellent graces, even faith and hope; for service and benefit to the church of God, it exceeds them all. Next he mentions *spiritual gifts*: such were the gift of tongues, the gift of miracles, the gift of healing, and lastly, *prophecy*, by which we are to understand an ordinary set course of preaching, interpreting and opening the holy scriptures, which contain a revelation of God's mind and will. Observe, 2. A threefold act recommended, answerable to a threefold object propounded. An act of prosecution; *desire*, prosecute and *follow after* charity as close as your persecutors pursue and follow after you. It imports a most earnest, vigorous, and vehement pursuit. An act of emulation; *ζήτεω*, *Desire earnestly spiritual gifts*. An act of election and choice: *Choose rather that ye may prophecy*, or clearly understand the mind of God yourselves, and have an ability to expound and explain it to others; this will bring most glory to God, most profit to his church, and most comfort to yourselves.

2 For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue, speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the Spirit he speaketh mysteries. 3 But he that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

Here observe, 1. That the gift of tongues, or speaking divers languages, was greatly

valued and much desired by some in the church at that time; probably for this reason, because the apostles were very eminently endowed with this gift, the Holy Ghost descending upon them in the shape of cloven tongues; but yet the gift of prophecy, that is, of understanding and interpreting God's will, was clearly the more valuable and desirable accomplishment; for though speaking with tongues created more admiration, and conciliated greater veneration to the speaker, yet prophesying was by far the most excellent gift, and tended most to the edification of the church: it is far better to *do good*, than to appear *great*; that is most valuable and excelling which is most advantageous and edifying. Observe, 2. How the apostle enters upon a comparison between the gift of speaking in an unknown tongue, and prophesying or speaking plainly to the church's benefit and comfort. *He that speaketh in an unknown tongue*, that is, in a language not understood, not explained or interpreted, *he speaketh not unto men*; that is, not to the understanding of men, for none understand him; but to God only, he alone understands him; and though in the Spirit he speaks mysteries, or the deep things of God, yet all this is not to edification, because not understood by the church. Whereas, *he that prophesieth*, that is, he that intelligibly openeth and applieth the word of God to his auditors in the congregation, what he speaks conduces exceedingly to their edification and consolation. Here note, That the apostle not only dislikes, but plainly forbids, preaching, praying, and all other offices being performed in the church in a language not understood. So that the practice of the church of Rome in their Latin prayers is a flat contradiction to this whole chapter, and to the practice of the primitive church, *Acts iv. 24*; who lifted up their voice with one accord, and offered up a reasonable service to God. The prayers of the Jewish church were made in the Hebrew tongue; and God gave the gift of tongues to the Christian church, that the apostles might establish the worship of God in every nation in their own language.

4 He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. 5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. 6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what

shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

Observe here, 1. Another argument used by the apostle to prove the gift of prophesying, that is, of interpreting the holy scripture, to be far more excellent than the gift of tongues, separated from the gift of interpretation: he that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifies none but himself, because none but himself understands it; but he that teacheth, instructeth, and exhorteth others, edifieth the church, or the whole assembly that he spake in. Observe, 2. The apostle wishes they all had the gift of tongues, because they were so very covetous and desirous of them: though alas! rather for their own ostentation than the church's edification: yet he rather desires, with Moses, that all the Lord's people were prophets; that is, directed and assisted by the Spirit of God, to deliver plainly and persuasively the will of God to men; for he is the greatest in the church who is most edifying; and he that prophesieth, edifieth more than he that speaketh all languages uninterpreted. Observe, 3. He amplifies this by instancing in his own person: *If I come to you speaking with tongues*; as if he had said, I wonder whether what you so admire in others would please you in me! suppose that I, whom God has eminently endowed with the gift of tongues, should come and speak to you in the Arabian language, what good would it do you! What would you be the wiser or better for me, should I make known to you some revelation which I immediately received from God, or open to you some truth which you knew not before, or urge you to some needful duty, or doctrinally expound to you the matters of faith and obedience recorded in the gospel, if either myself or some interpreter did not make what I say intelligible to you, what will it profit you! To deliver the mind and will of God plainly and persuasively to the church's benefit and edification, is much more acceptable to God, profitable to man, and comfortable to ourselves, than to speak with the tongues of men and angels, in language not understood, or not heard.

7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? 8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? 9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by

the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

Our apostle here proceeds to illustrate his former arguments by a similitude taken from musical instruments, the one used in peace, to wit, the harp; the other in war, to wit, the trumpet; as they are useless, if by distinction their signification is not perceived; for if a man hears not, or understands not, the sound of the harp or trumpet, he cannot prepare himself either for the dance, or the battle: so if persons in the church do not speak intelligibly, they will nothing edify: it is like beating the air, all is vain and to no purpose.

10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification: 11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian; and he that speaketh *shall be* a barbarian unto me. 12 Even as ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel, to the edifying of the church.

Here the apostle tells them, That there may probably be as many voices or languages in the world as there are nations; and every nation understands its own language, and commonly no other. Now, says the apostle, if he that has the gift of tongues speak to you in a language which ye understand not, will he not be a barbarian unto you? And if you talk to him in a language he understands not, will you not be barbarians unto him? Verily, it will be just as if two men of two different countries should talk to one another, and neither understands a word of each other. He farther adds, That seeing they were so very desirous of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, they should seek those gifts especially by which the church may receive edification and advantage: *Seek that ye may excel, to the edifying of the church.* Here note, 1. The noble end which St. Paul directs them to propound in what they desire and design, namely, *the edifying of the church.* The church's edification should be the scope of all her members', especially of all her ministers', wishes and prayers, enterprizes and endeavours: our first care should be to lay a right foundation, namely, the doctrine of redemption and salvation, by the meritorious undertaking of Christ Jesus our Lord, the eternal Son

of the Father. Our next care, that our superstructure be answerable to our foundation; this being solid and substantial, that must be so too; acquainting persons with the whole will of God, and the whole duty of man. Note, 2. The operation to be performed, and the means to be used in order to this noble end: *Seek that ye may excel;* that is, passionately desire and endeavour that you may, by the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, be eminently qualified for edifying and building the church of God; *Seek that ye may excel, to the edifying of the church.* Learn hence, 1. That the edifying of the church, and the improvement of its members in knowledge, faith, and holiness, is, and ought to be, the great end which the ministers of God propound to themselves in the use of their gifts, and discharge of their office. Learn, 2. That the edifying of the church being the proper office of the ministers of Christ, they should study to excel in all gifts and graces conducing thereunto, by such means and methods as are proper for that end; namely, by fervent prayer to God for divine illumination and knowledge, by reading the scriptures with great attention and application of mind, by studying other authors in order to that end, by deep meditation, by judicious, zealous, and laborious preaching, but especially by holy living. There ought to be a consecration of our lives, as well as of our persons, to the service of God and his church; in this manner, especially, the meanest of her ministers may seek that they may excel, to the edifying of the church.

13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown tongue* pray that he may interpret. 14 For if I pray in an *unknown tongue*, my spirit prayeth; but my understanding is unfruitful. 15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

Observe here, How strongly the apostle pleads the necessity for all public worship, particularly preaching or prophesying, praying and singing, to be performed in a language known and understood by all the congregation: *Let him that speaketh, preacheth, or teacheth, in an unknown tongue, in which he cannot edify others, pray for the edifying gift of interpretation, that others may be edified as well as himself; otherwise when we pray in an unknown tongue, our spirit prayeth, that is, our own gifts are exercised; but our understanding is*

unfruitful, that is, unto others. If we satisfy ourselves, we cannot edify them. He resolves therefore to pray with the spirit, and to sing with the spirit, that is, with a strange tongue ministered to him by the Spirit: yet to pray with the understanding also, that is, to pray so as others may understand him, and join with him, and be edified by him. Learn from hence, Both the impiety and absurdity of the church of Rome, in appointing their public offices to be performed in Latin; a language which the common people in France, Spain, Germany, yea, in Italy itself, do not understand; for the Latin tongue is not now the mother tongue of any nation under heaven: and the council of Trent thunders out an *anathema* against those that say the mass ought to be celebrated only in the vulgar tongue. Lord! what is it, if this be not, to offer the sacrifice of fools! How can this be a reasonable service, which is no better than a sinful taking God's name in vain. How can their hearts and tongues go along together, who understand nothing which their tongues utter. They neither know the God they pray to, nor yet the mercies which they pray for. Lord, pity the miserable souls in their communion, who erect an altar, and offer up *unknown prayers to an unknown God*.

16 Else, when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say Amen at thy giving of thanks? seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest. 17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. 18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all: 19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than *by my voice* I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown tongue*.

Our apostle still goes on, arguing, that public prayers ought to be made in a language understood by them that pray. His argument is this: The heart ought to consent to, and agree with, the supplications and prayers presented unto God, and to testify its consent by saying *Amen*; but, says the apostle, no man can say *Amen* to that which he doth not understand, nor be edified by that which cannot be understood. For a close, he tells them, that Almighty God had given him the gift of speaking more languages than all of them put together, that so as an apostle he might plant and propagate the Christian faith in and throughout all nations; yet he declares he

had rather speak a few words, to the instruction and edification of his hearers, than a multitude in a language not understood. The faithful ministers of Christ have such a regard to the end of their ministry, which is the communicating of the divine knowledge to the understandings of their people, that they had much rather they should be edified and profited, than their own parts and gifts applauded and admired.

20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children; but in understanding be men.

As if the apostle had said, My brethren, be not like children in understanding, who prefer gay and gaudy things, which make a fine show, as the gift of tongues does, before things more useful. Thus, do not you choose what best pleaseth you, but what most profits others. I would have you indeed in some respects to be as children, namely in innocence and harmlessness, in freedom from malice, and all kind of wickedness; but in understanding, be and act as men, as persons of mature judgment, who know what is fittest to be spoken, and best to be done. To be like children in the innocency of our actions, is a virtue; but to be like them in the impotency and weakness of our understanding, is a reproach: *In understanding be men*.

21 In the law it is written, With *men of other tongues and other lips* will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. 22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying *serveth* not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

Observe here, How the apostle, to take the Corinthians off from their fond admiration of the gift of tongues, tells them, That in the law, that is, in the writings of the Old Testament, particularly in *Isa. xxviii. 11.* it is declared, that because the people of Judah would not be instructed by the plain preaching of the Lord's prophets, therefore he would cause them to be spoken to in an unknown language; namely, by outlandish enemies and armies, whose language they should not understand: from whence he infers, that strange tongues were not given for a sign of any good to believers, but they were given as a token rather of God's displeasure to unbelievers; insomuch that, by the just judgment of God, their ignorance by this means would

be the more increased : but the gift of prophecy serveth not only for the conversion of unbelievers, but for the edification of believers also ; therefore prophecy, or preaching intelligibly, is to be preferred in the church before speaking with tongues.

23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad ? 24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. 25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest ; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

To convince the Corinthians that prophecy was far more excellent than the gift of tongues, the apostle here argues from the absurdity of speaking in the congregation with a strange tongue uninterpreted ; *Will they not say ye are mad ?* And from the utility and advantage of speaking in a language understood, it convinceth and converteth sinners : *He is convinced of all, he is judged of all.* As if the apostle had said, When the church meets together, if all that speak should speak in a strange tongue, what will an ignorant or unbelieving person, coming into the congregation, think or say ? Will he not apprehend you to be madmen ? Whereas if all that speak do prophecy and interpret scripture to the edification of the church, in such a case, if an unbeliever comes in, he is convinced, discovered, judged by all them that prophesy, and the secrets of his heart are made manifest to himself : and so, falling down, he will adore God, the searcher of the heart, and report, from his own experience, that God is in or among you of a truth. Where note, Whence prophesying or preaching of the word has its convincing power, and converting efficacy, namely, from that God who is present in and with his own word : *God is in, or with, you of a truth.* When Almighty God quickens the word with his own Spirit, and clothes it with his own power, when he bids it go in his might, and prevail in his strength, the strongest holds of ignorance and unbelief, of obstinacy and rebellion, fall to the ground like the first-ripe figs shaken with the wind : when the unlearned or idiot comes into the assembly of the saints, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all, he falls down and worships. What is it that works

this sudden change ? Not the preaching of men, but the power of God : *He will report that God is in you of a truth.* The arm of grace in the ministry of the word is victorious and invincible ; the efficacy and success of the word depends not on the parts of a man, but the power of God.

26 How is it then, brethren ? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

From this verse to the end of the chapter, the apostle lays down particular precepts for the preservation of decency and good order in the church of God ; and first he advises, when they came together into the public assemblies, that if any of them had a psalm or hymn suggested to them by the Spirit of God, to his glory, and the church's edification ; or had a doctrine, either for instruction or consolation ; or had a strange tongue, or the gift of interpreting tongues ; let it be how it will, he exhorts that all be done so as may most and best tend to the benefit and edification of the church, which is the true end of church assemblies. The great end, design, and aim, which those who administer in holy things ought to propound to themselves in all their public administrations, is the church's edification, the people's growth and improvement in knowledge, faith, and holiness. *Let all things be done to edifying ;* that is, let all your public offices be so performed, and in such a manner, as may best conduce to the end for which they were designed.

27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course ; and let one interpret. 28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church ; and let him speak to himself and to God. 29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. 30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. 31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. 32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets ; 33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Our apostle's next advice for the church's

edification, is this, That such as had the gift of tongues should not speak all together, but two or three successively, one after another; and that one interpret what was so spoken, to the benefit and edifying of the church. But if there were no interpreter present, let him, says the apostle, that only speaks with tongues, keep silence in the church; and let him only speak mentally to himself and to God, in prayer and thanksgiving. The same advice he gives to them that *prophesied*; to wit, that only two or three of them should prophesy successively, in order to the church's edification, and that the rest of the prophets should sit still and judge, examining their doctrines by the rule of the word: for says he, *the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets*; that is, the doctrines which the prophets deliver are apt to be judged and examined by other prophets, whether they be agreeable to the word of God or not: or the instinct by which the prophets pretend to be moved at that time to prophesy, is subject to the judgment and censure of other prophets who are endowed with the same gift. And thus he declares, that all that are prophets, and prophetically inspired, may prophesy, provided it be done orderly and successively, without occasioning disorder and confusion in the church; and so managed as to answer the great end of the institution; namely, the instruction, edification, and consolation of the church; *For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace*. Confusion is so far from being of divine inspiration, that it is hateful to God, who requires that peace and order should be kept and maintained, not only in the church of Corinth, but in all the churches of the saints. That which breaks order, doth also break peace: for there can be no true peace without order; and God is not the author of disorder and confusion in the churches, but of peace. Here by the way let us observe and note, That speaking and preaching in the public assemblies is limited all along, by the apostle, to the prophets. *Let the prophets speak*; not the common people; they were to sit by, it was no part of their business to speak, but to examine what was spoken by the rule of the word. The authoritative preaching of the gifted brethren, at the call of a private congregation, was no more permitted by St. Paul, than his suffering of women to speak in the church; none but prophets, or persons in office, appointed for the work of preaching, were ever suffered to undertake it in the primitive times, and downwards, till very lately. Let such as first gave, and still give, encouragement to the contrary, consider how

they will answer it at the bar of God, who is not the author of such confusion and disorder, but of peace.

34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded to be under obedience*, as also saith the law. 35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

A farther rule is here given by the apostle for maintaining decency and order in the public assemblies; namely, that the women should never presume to speak or utter any thing as public teachers in the congregation; no, nor so much as ask any question publicly. Almighty God having by his law made subjection (not public instruction) their duty, of which silence is a token. Here observe, That it is not the women's speaking in the public assemblies, when they join with the congregation in singing of psalms and prayer, but their speaking by way of teaching and prophesying that is there forbidden. Note farther, That the means of instruction were not denied the women; at home they might put forth questions to their husbands, for their own information and satisfaction; but to do any thing like this publicly was a shame, or indecent thing, both to the church, the husband, and herself. Still observe, How the God of order calls for order, and delights in decency, especially in places where his religious worship is celebrated. He has unworthy thoughts of God that thinks him either a patron of, or pleased with, any disorder, either in civil affairs, or religious services.

36 What! came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? 37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. 38 But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

These words are looked upon by interpreters as a smart reflection upon some of the ministers and members of the church at Corinth; who from a high opinion which they had of themselves and their own management, would not submit to the foregoing precepts, canons, and rules, for order and decency in the church of God. What, says the apostle, do you think that you have all the word and will of God! Doth all knowledge of scripture, and resolution

of doubts, rest in your breasts, and flow out of your lips! Consider, you are not the first church that was planted, (Jerusalem was before you,) the gospel was sent to you, it did not come out first from you. Whence learn, That all kind of scorn is not always uncomely: men are apt to overrate themselves, and to overvalue their own abilities, as if they had engrossed all knowledge, that all must borrow from their store, and light their candle at their torch. Now in that case we may, without breach of charity, or blemish of holiness, check pride with derision; and speak them below men, who set themselves up above men. Observe next, The apostle affirms, that these rules for order and decency which he had given them, were from the Lord; and he expected and required, that those who esteemed themselves prophets, should observe and obey them as such. But if men will be ignorant, and obstinate in their ignorance, be it at their peril, and let them look to it; do not you regard them: *If any be ignorant, let him be ignorant.*

39 Wherefore, brethren, cover to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. 40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

For a close of the whole, he exhorts them earnestly to endeavour after the gift of prophesying, and not to forbid the use of the gift of tongues, provided the fore-mentioned rules and directions before given be observed: that so in their public assemblies all things relating to religious worship be performed with that becoming gravity and decency which may most and best conduce to the glory of God and the church's edification. Learn hence, 1. That the whole church in general, and every individual member of it in particular, ought to perform all the duties of God's worship in a decent and orderly manner. Learn, 2. That it is the duty of church governors to take care that order and decency be enjoined and observed in the church of God, to the edification of all the members of it. Learn, 3. That they only have authority to make church orders whom the Lord has made church governors. Learn, 4. That such orders as relate to real decency in the worship of God, made and confirmed by the governors of the church, ought to be obeyed and conformed to by the members of the church for conscience' sake, that all things may be done decently and in order.

CHAP. XV.

The design and scope of our apostle in this excellent chapter now before us, is, to establish the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which some in the church of Corinth at that

time denied. This grand article of the Christian faith is here by several arguments defended, the absurdity of the contrary declared, the objections made against it fully answered, and Christian steadfastness in the faith, and laborious diligence in the work of Christ, urged and enforced to the end of the chapter.

MOREOVER, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Observe here, 1. The subject-matter of St. Paul's preaching to the Corinthians: it was the gospel. *I declare unto you the gospel which I preached;* and particularly the doctrine of the body's resurrection, which was a great point of that gospel which he had preached and delivered to them. Observe, 2. The obedience which many, if not most of the Corinthians, had given to the doctrine of the gospel; they heard it, believed it, and embraced it as the truth of God. *Which gospel ye received, and wherein ye stand;* that is, the best and greatest part of you are firm to your former profession, though some are fallen away. Observe, 3. The blessed effect which the gospel had upon those that did believe and receive it: *By it they were saved;* that is, put into a salvable state, brought into the right and only way that leads to salvation. The gospel reveals the object, *salvation;* it directs lost man which way to arrive at it, assures him that it is attainable, and inclines and encourages him seriously to endeavour after the attainment of it. Observe, 4. The condition annexed and required on our part, in order to the attaining that salvation which the gospel discovers unto us, and that is, perseverance; for that is implied in *our keeping in memory what we have received:* *Ye are saved, if ye keep in memory.* If we do not steadfastly cleave to the gospel, and to this grand doctrine of it, the *resurrection,* our hearing is vain, our believing is vain, our hopes of salvation are vain: *By the gospel we are saved, if we keep it in memory, and practise it;* otherwise we have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures; 5 And that he was seen of Cephas,

then of the twelve; 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present; but some are fallen asleep. 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

Observe here, The apostle's fidelity, 1. In delivering nothing to the church but what he had received: *I delivered to you first of all that which I also received*; either mediately by Ananias, or by immediate revelation from Christ himself. Observe, 2. The principal and fundamental doctrines or articles of faith, which the apostle in his preaching had insisted upon amongst them; namely, the death, the burial, and the resurrection, of our Lord and Saviour Jesus-Christ. *That he died for our sins*, that is, a voluntary sacrifice for our sins, to make an atonement for sin, as the prophets Isaiah and Daniel had long foretold. *And that he was buried*: the dead body of our dear Redeemer was decently buried by a small number of his own disciples, and continued in the state of the dead, and under the power of death for a time. That he was buried, is a demonstration of the certainty that he died. *And that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures*. Christ, though laid, was not lost, in the grave; but by the omnipotent power of his Godhead revived, and rose again from the dead the third day, to the consternation of his enemies, and the consolation of all believers. Observe, 3. How the apostle proves the truth and verity of Christ's resurrection by ocular demonstration; he is risen, because he was seen alive after his passion; first of Peter, next of the whole college of the apostles, which formerly consisted of twelve, then of five hundred brethren at once in Galilee, where of some were then alive to testify it; after which he was seen of James, and then of all the apostles. These were all holy persons, who durst not deceive, and who confirmed their testimony with their blood. So that no article of faith, no point of religion, is of more confessed truth and infallible certainty, than this of our Lord's resurrection; and blessed be God it is so, seeing the whole weight of faith, hope, and salvation, depends upon Christ as risen from the dead. Behold how great a weight the scripture hangs upon this nail: thanks be to God, it is a nail fastened in a sure place. Our Lord's resurrection is his church's consolation.

9 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

As Christ was seen of St. Paul last of all the apostles, so it is probable he was seen last by him, of all persons. We read not of any that saw Christ after St. Stephen and St. Paul, who here reckons himself among those who were eye-witnesses of the risen Jesus: *Last of all he was seen of me also*. Observe farther, the great humility of St. Paul, in styling himself an untimely birth, or a person *born out of due time*. But in what sense doth he mean that he was born out of due time? *Answer*, 1. Negatively; not that he was, as to his spiritual birth, born too soon, but rather too late. Alas! he had been too long a proud pharisee, a formal professor, a fiery persecutor. In this sense he was no abortive, or born out of due time, or rather born too late than too soon. But positively, he calls himself an abortive, or untimely birth, 1. Because he was the last of the apostles that was called; the rest were called by Christ whilst here on earth. Paul was called by Christ from heaven, after his departure from earth to heaven. 2. Because of the suddenness and violence of his conversion; an abortion is occasioned by some sudden surprise, some strain, or violent motion. St. Paul's conversion was a wonderful violent conversion, out of the ordinary way and course; he was smitten from his horse to the ground, and lay as one dead in his passage to his new life. 3. Because abortive children are lesser, weaker, and more imperfect children, than those of full of growth. As an abortive child is the least of children, so he reckons himself the least of the apostles, and styles himself so in the next verse, where he thus speaks, *I was as one born out of due time*.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11 Therefore, whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

Observe here, 1. The profound humility of this great apostle, and how low he was in his own thoughts: he calls himself *the least of the apostles*, nay, *not meet* or worthy to be called an apostle, because he had persecuted the church of Christ with so much fury and fierceness. Elsewhere he

styles himself *less than the least of all saints*; not that any thing can be less than the least; but the original being a double diminutive, his meaning is, that he was as little as could be. O admirable humility! The more we know of God and ourselves, the more humble apprehensions we shall have of ourselves; a good man's thoughts are always lowest of himself; the more holiness any man has, the more humility he has. Humility is a great evidence of our holiness, it being indeed a great part of our holiness. Observe, 2. How the apostle ascribes all that he was, wherein he differed from others, to the grace of God: *By the grace of God I am what I am*. As we receive our natural being from the power of God, so we derive our spiritual being from the grace of God. If I forbear what is evil, it is from restraining grace; if I follow what is spiritually good, it is from sanctifying grace: therefore *not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy grace be the praise*. Observe, 3. The blessed fruit which the grace of God produced in St. Paul: it caused him to labour, (grace is an active principle,) to labour abundantly, to labour more abundantly than all the apostles; not more than all of them put together, but more than any one of them that were his fellow apostles separately considered. Such as receive most grace and favour from God, are holily ambitious to do the utmost services for God. Observe, 4. Lest he should seem to be too assuming, and to arrogate any thing to himself, he adds, *Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*. Behold how the holy apostle ascribes the fruit of all his endeavours to the grace of God, to the influences and assistances of the Holy Spirit of grace, exciting him, assisting him, working in and with him, and succeeding of him in all his enterprises and undertakings for the glory of God, and the good of souls. *I laboured, yet not I, but divine grace that went along with me*. Observe, 5. The inference which the apostle draws from the whole: *Therefore, whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed*. That is, whether it were I, or any other of the apostles, who laboured most in the preaching of the gospel, the doctrine is the same; namely, that Christ died for our sins, rose again, and will raise us. This is the doctrine which we apostles preached, and which you Corinthians believed and received; therefore why should any of you now stagger in the faith, and disbelieve the resurrection of the body? which is a blow made at the root of Christianity. Alas! what have we to carry our spirits through all the rugged passages and cross dispensations of this life, but only

our hopes in reversion, only our hopes of a glorious resurrection, and blessed immortality.

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised. 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

Our apostle having asserted and proved the resurrection of Christ by ocular demonstration, by a plentiful testimony of those who saw him after he was risen, and withal informed them that this was the doctrine of the gospel which both he and the rest of the apostles had with one consent preached to them, he from hence infers the certainty and necessity of our resurrection. And because some of the church of Corinth were tainted with the wicked opinion of the Sadducees, who said there was no resurrection; therefore to strangle this monstrous opinion amongst the Corinthians in the birth, he shows the absurdity of it in these verses before us. His first argument runs thus: If there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ the head is not risen; for if the head be risen, he will certainly raise up his members. Christ's resurrection is the cause, the pattern, and archetype of ours: he did not only raise his body from the grave, but his church with him. For indeed Christ is not perfectly risen, till all his members are risen with him, and raised like him. True it is, that Christ's personal resurrection was perfect when he arose; and it is as true, that all believers arose representatively when Christ arose. But till all believers arise personally, the resurrection of Christ has not received its utmost perfection. His next work is to prove the certainty of Christ's resurrection, from the manifold absurdities which would follow upon the denial of it; as namely, first, if Christ be not risen, then the apostle's

preaching was vain, and their belief of it was vain also. *Our preaching is vain*; that is, we who in our preaching have so strongly asserted Christ's resurrection as an infallible argument of the divinity of his person and doctrine, have taught you a vain and idle dream. *And your faith in Christ, as risen from the dead, is no better than a fancy, vain also*; seeing the object of it faileth, Christ as risen from the dead. 2. If Christ be not risen, then *we are found false witnesses of God*: that is, then St. Paul himself, and the other apostles, had given a false testimony of God to the world, in affirming that God the Father had raised up Christ his Son from the dead: which he did not do, if there be no resurrection of the dead. To be false witnesses for men, is a sin of no common guilt; but to belie God, and be false witnesses for God, is a sin of aggravated guilt, which the holy apostles could not be supposed to be guilty of. Again, 3. If Christ be not raised from the dead, *then we are yet in our sins*; that is, under the guilt of our sins, and liable to condemnation for our sins: we are not justified and absolved from them, unless Christ has expiated the guilt of them; and this he has not done if he be not risen, but remains himself under the power of death; for he was raised again for our justification. Farther, 4. If Christ be not risen, then *they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished*; that is, the dead saints in general, and the holy martyrs and sufferers for Christ, in particular, *who are fallen asleep, are perished* utterly, and lost finally, if there be no resurrection: martyrs will then be great losers, and martyrdom great folly. Lastly, Then Christians *are of all men most miserable*. As if the apostle had said, As those martyrs were arrant fools, and perished as such, who laid down their lives for Christ, if they have no hopes of a resurrection, when they shall take them up again; so we Christians that survive are the wretchedest creatures upon earth, who undergo all the sufferings and hardships of this life; and deny ourselves many comforts and advantages which we might enjoy. If after this mortal life we have no hope, who would care to do well, or who would fear to do ill? Were this believed, none would live so fleshly and sensual a life as those that do not believe the resurrection of the flesh; and none would be so miserable in this life as the holy, self-denying Christian, had he not a hope after death of a glorious resurrection. Learn hence, That true Christians would be more unhappy than any other men, if their happiness were confined to this life only: we are of all men most

miserable. We Christians are more miserable than other mortals; and we apostles and ministers more miserable than other Christians, who, like beacons upon the tops of mountains, stand open continually to all storms and tempests raised against us by men and devils.

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

Observe here, 1. The resurrection of Christ declared: *Now is Christ risen from the dead*. 2. Our resurrection from his is inferred and insured: he arose *as the first fruit's of them that slept*. The term of first-fruits is metaphorical, alluding to the oblation of the first-fruits in the Levitical law, Lev. xxiii. 9. These were offered both as an acknowledgment that the whole crop was God's, and as a pledge and assurance of their enjoying the whole crop from God, and as a mean by which the whole crop was consecrated and sanctified to their use. As sure as the whole harvest follows the first-fruits, so shall the saints' resurrection follow the resurrection of Christ, as an effect follows its proper cause; for Christ's resurrection is the meritorious cause, the efficient cause, and the exemplary cause, of our resurrection; and as it is the cause, so is it the pledge, the earnest and the full assurance of ours. Observe, 3. Christ is called the first-fruits of them that slept; that is, the first-fruits from the dead of them that slept; not as if Christ were absolutely the first that was raised from the dead, for we read of one raised by Elijah, and another by Elisha, and of Lazarus raised by Christ; but these were so raised as to die again; they were not raised to a life of immortality: but now Christ was the first that arose never to die more; the first that arose by his own power, the first that arose to give others a pledge and assurance of their rising after him, and of their rising like unto him. Christ's resurrection is the cause, the pattern, the pledge, the assurance of the believer's resurrection: *Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept*.

21 For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Here observe, That our apostle, to prove Christ's resurrection to be the cause of our resurrection, makes a comparison betwixt Adam and Christ, whom he represents as two originals and fountains, the one of death the other of life. As by Adam's sin all that are partakers of his human nature

die a natural death, so all that are partakers of Christ's divine nature, all that are his spiritual seed and offspring, shall be raised and made alive by him; for the expressions, in *Adam* and in *Christ*, do denote a casualty in both, the one of *death*, and the other of *life*; as the death of all mankind came by Adam, so the resurrection of all mankind comes by Christ. The wicked shall be raised by him *officio judicis*, by the power of Christ as their lord and judge: the righteous shall be raised *beneficio Mediatoris*, by virtue of their union with him as their head.

23 But every man in his own order; Christ the first-fruits: afterward they that are Christ's, at his coming. 24 Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

Here our apostle answers an objection. Some might say, If Christ's resurrection be the cause of the believer's resurrection, then why did not all believers rise when he arose? The Head being risen, why did not all the members rise with him? He answers, No: God hath appointed an order which must be observed; and this order was, that Christ should be the first-fruits of the harvest; that he should rise first from the dead, and then they that are Christ's, at his coming to judgment, shall rise after him. And then *cometh the end*; that is, the end of the world, when Christ will deliver up his kingdom to God the Father. What kingdom? His mediatorial kingdom, which, as Mediator, he received from his Father; not his natural and essential kingdom, which as God he had with his Father from eternity; this shall never be delivered up, for of this his kingdom there shall be no end. But at the end of the world, Christ having subdued all his and his church's enemies, and put down all rule, authority, and power, both in the world and in the church, he shall deliver up his mediatorial kingdom to his Father, and reign no longer as Mediator, and as deputed by his Father; but he shall still reign, eternally reign, as God equal with the Father; for his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth to eternal ages. Here note, That when our apostle is setting forth the order in which the saints shall arise, he says nothing of a first and second resurrection, nothing of a first and second coming of

Christ to judgment; one to reign on earth a thousand years, and a second to judge all the world. Mention is here made of a general resurrection, when all the saints shall be raised together; but not a word of some being raised before the rest to reign with Christ a thousand years.

26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Observe here, 1. What sin had subjected the human nature to, and that is, death; sin brought mortality into our natures, and the wages of sin is death. Observe, 2. That death is an enemy to humanity, an enemy to the whole race of mankind, both to body and soul, to the righteous and to the wicked; to the body, by turning that which is the glory of the creation in a moment into rottenness and putrefaction; to the soul, by occasioning its separation from the body, towards which it has so strong and affectionate an inclination and desire, as its old companion. Death is also an enemy to the righteous, as it blunts the edge of his desires after heaven, and abates that joy which he should have in the believing thoughts and apprehensions of heaven; and it is an enemy to the wicked, as it is a passage to everlasting misery, by their falling immediately into the hands of the living God, from whose mouth they receive a final sentence to depart accursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Observe, 3. That this enemy is the last enemy; it is so to the children of God; when they have overcome death, they have overcome all their enemies at once, and especially their worst enemy, sin, which they could never overcome before fully. Blessed be God, though death came into the world by sin, yet sin shall go out of the world by death. Note, 4. This last enemy shall be destroyed, by losing its sting that it cannot annoy, by losing its power that it cannot destroy; and by losing its very being, it shall be finally abolished and destroyed, by a resurrection from the dead. Note, 5. The destroyer of death, this last enemy, is Christ, Hos. xiii. 14. *I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death.* Christ has conquered death meritoriously by his satisfaction, victoriously by his resurrection. 6. The scope and drift of the apostle's argument in this assertion: and that is, to prove the necessity of his resurrection. The argument lies thus: Christ must reign till all his enemies are destroyed; but death is one of these enemies, the last of them which keeps the believer's body from union with his soul, and from

communion with Christ: therefore death must be destroyed; and there is no other way to destroy death but by a resurrection from the dead, which is the truth our apostle strongly proves throughout this chapter.

27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put under *him*; it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him. 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

Our apostle here proceeds in the argument which he begun at the 24th and 25th verses, that Christ must continue as Mediator to reign till all things are subject to him, and all enemies subdued by him. This the apostle here proves, because God the Father has put all things, and all persons, under his Son's feet, as Mediator, himself only excepted; God the Father having reserved to himself his own sovereign empire and supreme authority; he being excepted from this subjection himself, who gave it to his Son. And when all things shall be thus subdued to Christ, then his mediatorial kingdom shall be delivered up to his Father, from whom he received it; yea, the Son himself, as Mediator and Head of the church, shall be subject to the Deity, that God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, may be all in all by a full communication to, and intimate union with, the saints. Learn hence, 1. That the mediatorial kingdom of Christ was given to him by God the Father, as a reward for his sufferings, Phil. ii. 8, 9. *He became obedient to the death, wherefore God hath highly exalted him.* 2. That this mediatorial kingdom was given to Christ only according to his human nature; seeing the human nature only suffered, and the divine nature is capable of no such exaltation or new dominion, he was thus exalted, *because he was the Son of man*, John v. 27. Learn, 3. That during the continuance of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, the Father judges no man, but commits all judgment unto his Son, giving him full power and authority to punish and reward according to his own wisdom, will, and pleasure: and as Lord of all, he gives laws to all. 4. That this mediatorial kingdom, Christ shall certainly lay down; when all things are subdued unto him, the exercise of his kingly power shall cease then; and as Christ is now all in all with relation to his church, the Godhead then will be all in all; and Christ himself, *as man*, will be

subject to his Father, as well as saints and angels are subject to him. From those words, *God shall be all in all*, we learn, That all the saints shall be abundantly satisfied in heaven, with the fruition of the Deity alone; there is enough in God alone eternally to fill and satisfy all the blessed souls in heaven, without the addition of any creature comfort. God is complete satisfaction to his children in the absence (I must not say want) of all other enjoyments; we shall want none of them at our journey's end, for there God will be all in all: as in heaven we shall see God, so we shall there eye nothing but God.

29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?

Expositors do vary exceedingly in the sense and interpretation of this difficult text: some understand it of a sacramental, some of a funeral, and some of a metaphorical baptism or washing. Those who understand it of a sacramental baptizing, say, that the *baptized for the dead*, are those who are baptized upon the article of the resurrection of the dead, and consequently in hope of the resurrection. As if the apostle had said, As for those among you in the church of Corinth, who are baptized persons, and yet deny the resurrection of the dead, I would demand of them, why they have in their baptism made a profession of believing the article of the resurrection; why were they baptized in this faith, if they now renounce it? To be a baptized Christian, and yet deny the resurrection, is a flat and plain contradiction. Others understand it of a funeral washing of the dead corpse in order to burial; and they say this was done in the belief and expectation of the dead body rising again. As if he had said, If the dead corpse shall never rise more, to what purpose do you wash them? Do men give respect where there is no hope? Others will have a metaphorical and allegorical baptism here intended, namely afflictions, persecutions, and martyrdom. As if he had said, If there be no resurrection of the dead, what benefit will accrue to those that suffer persecution, and death itself, for professing and defending the resurrection of some that are dead, namely, Christ Jesus, whose resurrection is past; and of the saints, whose resurrection is to come? Some, last of all, render the words thus: Moreover, what shall they do that are baptized for the sake of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are they therefore baptized for the sake of the dead? As if the apostle had

said, What shall they do which are baptized for the sake of the holy saints and martyrs deceased? Is it not by reason of them, that they take up the profession of Christianity? Yes, surely, the sight of the holiness of their lives, and of their courage and constancy at their deaths, has stirred up many to espouse the same holy religion, and to admit themselves into it by the sacrament of baptism: The death of an eminent saint made a great number of disciples in those days, and the blood of an holy martyr baptized whole cities; now to what purpose is all this. *if the dead rise not at all.*

30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? 31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

Our apostle is still arguing for the belief of the resurrection of the dead, and seems to speak here after this manner: what folly would it be in us Christians, to choose a religion that exposes us continually to death and danger? Why should we run the hazard of the loss of estate, liberty, and life itself, if there be no resurrection in order to a retribution, when our courage and constancy for Christ and his holy religion shall be acknowledged and rewarded? *Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?* Intimating, that it would be the greatest folly and madness to suffer the worst of evils for the sake of Christianity, if all our hopes perish in the grave. He adds farther, That as to himself *he died daily*; that is, was continually exposed to death, in danger of it, in expectation of it, and in a preparation for it; which he would never have been, if he had not an expectation of a glorious resurrection, when all his sufferings and services should be rewarded. And to confirm the truth of what he said, he binds with a solemn protestation, *I protest by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily*; that is, either I protest by all the joy which I have in your conversion to Christianity, and by all that rejoicing which is found with me for the success of my ministry among you: or else, I protest by all that rejoicing which I have in common with you and all Christians under the heaviest sufferings for the sake of Christ Jesus our Lord, that I live continually a dying life, perpetually in expectation of death, and preparation for it.

32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.

The apostle had mentioned his sufferings

in general, in the former verses, to testify his belief and hope of a future resurrection: here he relates one particular kind and manner of suffering; namely, his *fighting with beasts at Ephesus*. To what purpose had he that mighty struggle there, and ran such a hazard of his life as that was, if he had no hope of a better life after this, no expectation of a blessed resurrection?

If I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, &c. A twofold interpretation is given of these words: some understand them literally and properly, that he did really combat with wild beasts; it being usual in those times of persecution, under heathenish powers, to cast Christians to wild beasts; the common cry then was, *Christianos ad leones*, Away with the Christians to the lions. But some object against this interpretation, That the apostle being a freeman of Rome, had no such indignity offered to him; that in the *Acts* of the Apostles St. Luke gives no relation of it; and that the apostle himself in the catalogue he gives of his sufferings, *2 Cor. xi.* makes no mention of it; unless it be comprehended under those general words, *In deaths often*. Others therefore understand the words in a metaphorical sense, *I have fought with beasts*: that is, with savage men, with men like beasts in their manners and conditions. And thus some refer this conflict to *Acts xix.* where we read of his contest with Demetrius, and the silversmiths, about Diana's temple at Ephesus. Others refer it to *Acts xiv.* when he was stoned at Lystra, and left for dead. But whether we understand it literally or figuratively, the force of the argument lies thus: If I have undergone such deaths and dangers at Ephesus as I have done, and exposed my life to the utmost hazard, in hopes of a happy resurrection, what profit is all this to me, if there be no resurrection? What get I by such hazards and hardships, if there be no life to come? Nay, if matters be so, it will be more reasonable to say, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*. Verily, then, sensual fools are the wisest men; and they have the best of it that gratify their appetites and brutish desires, expecting they shall shortly die, and there will be an end of them. Learn hence, 1. That faith in the resurrection to a future life, encourages us against all the troubles and afflictions of this present life; the hope of future good is a powerful support under the pressure and burden of present evil. Learn, 2. That upon supposition that there is no happiness beyond the grave, a life of sensual pleasure is not absurd. The epicure's song (*Ede, bibe, lude, post mortem nulla voluptas*; *Eat, drink, play, and while it is day, for*

after death no man shall breathe;) seems not unreasonable.

33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. 34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak *this* to your shame.

Here the apostle advises them to take heed of being corrupted in their manners by such wicked principles as epicures would be ready to instil into them. Ill words draw persons on to ill deeds; therefore, says he, look to your communication and discourse, take heed of debauching your morals by evil communications; and he backs this exhortation with a forcible motive, because that such sensual principles and lewd opinions show that men's consciences and reason are in a deep sleep, and that a sottish stupidity has benumbed them: so much is implied in the next words, *Awake to righteousness and sin not*. Here note, 1. That sin is frequently in scripture compared to sleep, and very fitly, because sinners apprehend things no better than men asleep; all their apprehensions of God and Christ, of heaven and hell, of eternity and a life to come, are slight and hovering notions, wild and uncertain guesses: and the most substantial realities are with them but mere fancies. Again, he that is asleep is void of all care and fear, full of forgetfulness, unapprehensive of dangers; such is the sinner, whilst he continues asleep in sin, secure, but not safe. Note, 2. That repentance is the soul's awaking out of the sleep of sin: the soul rouses up, apprehends, and considers its dangers, whilst there is possibility to escape it, and accordingly by repentance flies from the wrath to come. Note, 3. That it is not enough that we awake from sin, but we must awake to righteousness; we must not only eschew evil, but do good: for a negative holiness saves none; the positive fruits of holiness towards God, and righteousness towards our neighbour, must be brought forth by us, and the duties of both tables be observed of us; this will be an argument of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession. The want of this, the apostle tells the Corinthians here, argued them not to have the true knowledge of God, which was really matter of shame to them, considering the means and advantages enjoyed by them: *Some have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame*.

35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up; and with what body do they come? 36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quick-

ened, except it die. **37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain; it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: 38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.**

Our apostle, having fully proved the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, in the foregoing part of the chapter, comes next to answer the objections that might be made against the body's resurrection. And first, That it seems impossible that the dead should rise: to this he answers, That it is as possible for the dead to rise, as it is for corn sown in the earth to be quickened after it dies in the earth; corn sown rots and dies, yet doth not perish by dying, but rises up green and fresh. Thus the body sown in the grave is not lost: though the parts of the body by death are dissolved, yet they are not annihilated; they are scattered, but they are not perished; they lose not their entity, when they part with their relation to humanity; whatsoever we lose at death, is not lost to God; his knowledge is infinite, and his power unlimited: it is as easy for God to raise our bodies out of the dust, as to make them at first out of nothing; therefore Christ told the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, that they erred, *not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God*, Matt. xxii. 29. The next objection against the body's resurrection is this: Who, say the objectors, can describe with what bodies the dead shall arise? Our apostle's answer is to this effect: That our bodies shall arise the same in substance, though not in qualities; as corn sown is raised in substance and kind the same, but differs in qualities, coming up with blade and ear, and corn in it; it does not rise in the same figure in which it was sown, but it rises in the same nature in which it was sown; that which was sown wheat, rises wheat. Thus our bodies sown in the grave shall rise substantially the same, but different in qualities. Here note, That those who did not believe the resurrection of the body, judged it not only an impossible thing, but an unworthy thing for God to raise the dead; they looked upon the body as the sepulchre and prison of the soul, and accounted it the soul's chiefest happiness to be delivered from the body, esteeming it a real punishment to the soul to be again reunited to so great a clog as the body is. Therefore to this objection the apostle returns a satisfactory answer, by showing the happy change which shall pass upon the raised body; declaring, that though it

shall arise the same body in substance, yet vastly different in qualities; of a mortal body sown, it shall rise a spiritual body; of a vile body, be made a glorious body.

† 39 All flesh is not the same flesh: but *there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.* 40 *There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.* 41 *There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory.* 42 *So also is the resurrection of the dead.*—

St. Paul here proceeds farther to answer the question which the philosophers at Corinth put, namely, with what bodies do persons come forth out of the grave? He tells them, they shall be vastly different in qualities from what they are at present; and this he illustrates by similitude. As, says he, there is difference in bodies here below, some more excellent, as the flesh of men, others less excellent, as the flesh of beasts and birds; and as there is a difference between celestial and terrestrial bodies, yea, a difference between celestial bodies among themselves, one excelling another in glory, as the sun excels the moon, and one star excels another; so will it be in the resurrection, the bodies that rise will vastly differ from those that died. Here note, That all this is to be understood of the resurrection of the righteous, since it is their bodies alone that shall undergo this happy change, which in the next words the apostle describes.

—It is sown in corruption; it is raised incorruption: 43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.—

Here the apostle gives a fourfold instance of the body's different qualities in the resurrection: *It is sown in corruption*; that is, it is here a frail mortal body, subject to putrefaction; but when raised shall be *incorruptible*, that is, never more subject to death or dissolution. It is here a vile body, subject to deformity and dishonour, and when sown or laid in the grave, is loathsome and unlovely; but shall be *raised in glory*, a bright and beautiful body, shining like the sun in the firmament of the hea-

vens. It is thought we shall rise in a full and perfect age, in full strength, activity, and vigour: and whereas our bodies now move heavily, they shall then ascend and descend like angels. Again, *It is sown in weakness*; that is, it is subject to weakness by labour, to decays by age, to impotency and wastings by diseases; and when it dies, it appears an impotent piece of clay. But it shall be *raised in power* by God's power; it shall be raised a powerful body; no more impotent, weak, or feeble, but strong and active, vigorous and nimble; never subject more either to weariness or weakness. Lastly, *It is sown a natural body*, an animal body, a body suited to this lower sensible state, in which we live at present; and when it dies, it is sown in the grave, like the body of a beast. But it shall be *raised a spiritual body*. Mark, he doth not say it shall be changed into a spirit, but into a spiritual body; a body it shall remain still, but spiritualized. It is probable that our bodies will then be aerial, and thin, and light, more suited to the nature of the soul, as active as fire, as fine and thin as the air. More particularly note here, that the raised body will be a spiritual body in a threefold respect. 1. As it shall always be subject and serviceable to the spirit. Here the soul is subject to the body; the soul must go the body's pace; but at the resurrection the body shall be everlastingly subject to the soul or spirit, and for that reason is called a spiritual body. 2. It may be called a spiritual body, in regard of the great strength and activity with which the body shall be then endowed; spirits are strong, and so is every thing that is spiritual. The devil is called a spiritual enemy, because he is a powerful enemy. Thus our spiritual bodies will be strong bodies; and strong had they need to be, that they may be able to bear *that exceeding weight of glory*, as the apostle calls it, 2 Cor. iv. 17, which would crush our bodies under it, were they not made strong to bear it. 3. It is called *spiritual*, because it will then need no natural helps to support it, as meat, drink, sleep, and clothing. We shall want these no more than the angels want them, being immediately supported by the power of God, as they are. Thus it is sown a natural body, but raised a spiritual body; not attenuated into a spirit, but still a body; a real, but spiritual body. The body, after the resurrection, shall be true flesh, but spiritualized, rarefied, and refined; it shall not lose any perfections which it had, but gain many perfections which it had not. Hail, happy day, when soul and body shall be re-united, and the happiness of both completed! How

will the soul then bless God for that body which was here its instrument and assistant in the service of God; and how will the body then bless God for such a soul, which was so careful to secure an interest in that happiness which it was created for, and made capable of! Then will full glory be poured into the soul: and when it is a second time married to the body, it shall have a greater degree of glory than ever it had.

—There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 45 And so it is written, *The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.* 46 Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. 47 *The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.* 48 *As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.* 49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle draws a parallel between the two Adams, the first man and Christ; they were two roots and distinct fountains, from whence all life did spring and flow; all natural life from the first Adam, all spiritual life from Christ the second Adam; *The first Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.* Observe, 2. The apostle compares the animal life we live by the union of our souls and bodies, with the spiritual life we live by the union of our souls with Christ. In point of dignity and real excellency, the spiritual life is far before the natural; but in point of priority, the natural life is before the spiritual. *First that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual.* Observe, 3. What the pedigree and original of man was and is: *He is of the earth, earthy.* Earth is the original of man, the matter out of which his form was produced. Hence the earth is called *his earth*, Psal. cxlvi. 4. *His breath goeth forth, and he returneth to his earth.* Observe, 4. As believers have borne in their bodies here on earth the image of the first Adam, so in the resurrection their bodies shall bear the image of the heavenly Adam; that is, be changed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. This is the highest degree of dignity and honour that a human body

is capable of. Those bodies which in their first formation were of dust and clay, and which in their dissolution are no better than a lump of corruption, when the grave delivers them back again shall be shining and excellent fabrics, bearing the image of Christ the heavenly Adam. Then will the saints' bodies be absolutely and everlastingly freed from all natural infirmities, from all accidental deformities, from all wants and necessities; and shall never more be subject to death, that formidable adversary of human nature. O blessed hour! when both soul and body shall live immediately upon God, and act freely and delightfully for God, and be forever satisfied in the full fruition and final enjoyment of God.

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

By *flesh and blood*, here, we are to understand our bodies in their present natural, corruptible, and mortal state. Such flesh and blood as ours is at present, unchanged, and unclothed with its heavenly body, *cannot inherit the kingdom of God*; that is, it cannot possibly enter into heaven, and bear the weight of glory which will there be put upon it. *Corruption*, or nature subject to corruption, *cannot inherit incorruption*; that is, our corruptible bodies cannot enter into an incorruptible heaven. Note here, Another argument produced by the apostle, to prove the necessity of the resurrection, or of raising and new-moulding the body in a spiritual condition: because our natural body, till it be made spiritual, cannot bear the presence of God in heaven; it must be fitted for that glorious place and state, before it be brought into it: by a change of qualities it must be spiritualized, purified, and immortalized, or it can never bear that weight of glory which is prepared for the saints in that glorious kingdom.

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Here the apostle answers a third objection: some might say, What shall become of those who shall be found alive at Christ's coming? He answers, they shall not die or sleep, but yet shall undergo a change as well as those that rise from the dead; these shall have flesh and blood changed

into spiritual bodies, as well as they, and of mortal be made immortal, of corruptible become incorruptible, and all this in a moment of time. Christ's powerful voice will be like a trumpet, calling men together; and the dead shall be raised, and living saints changed into an incorruptible state.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

Observe here, The identical expressions used by the apostle: he doth not say, corruptible must put on incorruption, and mortal must put on immortality, but *this* corruptible and *this* mortal, to show the identity and sameness of it. I believe the resurrection of *this* body, said the primitive Christians. Every man at the resurrection shall receive the same body that now he hath, and be the same person that now he is. Though he be not in every consideration what he was, yet he shall be who he was. If the same body that falls be not raised, it is not a resurrection, but a new creation. Indeed it is both unreasonable and unjust, that a person should sin in one body, and suffer in another; or serve God in one body, and be glorified in another. Job was clear in the belief of this, chap. xix. 26, 27, *In my flesh shall I see God, and mine eyes shall behold him. I shall see God, and mine eyes shall behold him.* This points out the reality of the resurrection; and *with these eyes behold him*, this denotes the identity of the resurrection, that the same body shall rise again. The resurrection is not a creation of new bodies, but only a restitution of the old ones.

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?

Here observe, 1. The happy condition of believers in the glorious morning of the resurrection, when their corruptible bodies shall be made by the power of Christ incorruptible and immortal: *Then shall death be swallowed up in victory*; that is, be overcome for ever, never to destroy or hurt any more, or to have the least power over the body for ever. The conqueror of all flesh is now fully conquered, and the spoiler of mankind finally spoiled. O Death! thou wert once a victorious conqueror, an universal conqueror, slaying

not thy thousands and ten thousands only, but beyond number; from the infant to the aged, from the dunghill to the throne, sparing neither age nor sex, neither great nor small, neither sacred nor profane. But the Captain of our salvation having entered into the grave, the territories of death, the king of terrors, has there encountered, disarmed, and destroyed, this victorious conqueror: *Death is swallowed up in victory.* Some read it, Death is swallowed down, death is drank up at a draught. Christ called his sufferings, by which he obtained victory over death, *a cup*; and as death is drank up, so mortality is swallowed up, 2 Cor. v. 4. Blessed be God, beyond the grave there is neither death, nor any thing like death, neither death nor mortality. The one is abolished, the other *swallowed up of life.* Observe, 2. How the apostle, in the name of all believers, triumphs and holily insults over death, the last conquered enemy. He laughs at it to the very face with a pious scorn and holy derision: *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* As if a man having disarmed his enemy should say, Now, sir, where's your sword? where's your pistol? Thus the believer: O death, thou thoughtest to pierce, to pain, to poison us with thy sting; but *where is now thy sting?* Thou thoughtest thyself a conqueror, but behold thou art conquered. Where is now thy victory? Blessed be God for these songs of victory and triumph, which the Captain of our salvation has put into the mouths of all those that fight under his exalted banner.

56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

Observe here, 1. Death has its sting. A sting has a threefold property, to pierce, to pain, and to poison: all which were applicable unto death. Observe, 2. Death's sting is sin, or death has its sting upon the account of sin. Sin, like a sting, pierces; it pierces us in its guilt, it pierced Christ in its punishment. The soul which no weapon can reach, sin can wound. As a sting, it paineth as well as pierceth. Judas was so pained with it, that in the height of horror he hanged himself in hopes of ease. And as a sting it poisoneth; sin is a deadly poison, pleasant in the mouth, bitter in the belly, baneful in the end. So strong a poison is sin, that nothing could expel it but the blood of Christ. Observe, 3. Death comes to a believer without a sting; behold, Christ became obedient unto death, that he might unstring death. Death shot its sting into our Saviour's side, there left it, and there lost it: it is not now unto

any of his members a hurting, but a healing serpent; there is now no venom, no malignity in it. Observe, 4. That as sin is the sting of death, so the strength of sin is the law. Not as if the law did encourage a man to sin, or strengthen him in sinning: for it prohibits sin under the severest penalties, and condemns the sinner to the pit of hell: but the law gives life, or adds strength, to sin. 1. By the curse and obligation of it, binding the sinner under the guilt of sin to the judgment of the great day. Thus the law strengthens sin, by putting into it a condemning power. 2. By the irritation of the law: sin takes occasion by the law, and by the commandment becomes exceeding sinful; when lust finds itself restrained, then like a river that is stopt, it rises and foams and rebels against the law of the mind, and fetches in all its force to rescue itself from that sword which heweth it in pieces. 2. By the conviction and manifestation of the law, laying open sin to the conscience of the sinner, and showing him that God is all eye to see, and all fire to consume, every unclean thing. Thus the law gives sin its strength, and death its warrant, to arrest and execute us. Ah, wretched and miserable sinner! upon whom, together with death, the weight of sin, and the curse of the law fall together! which woundeth deep, and presseth low, even to the lowest hell, unless thou canst say truly, what the apostle doth triumphantly, in the next verse.

57. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory—

Over sin, death, and the law.

—Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is, through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Observe here, 1. An enemy encountered, death: death armed by sin, and strengthened by the law. This is often a surprising enemy, an amazing enemy, a spoiling and destroying enemy, an inevitable and unavoidable enemy. Observe, 2. Victory over this enemy declared: the destruction of death, as to its terror and power. Death is overcome. But how! *Non ut ne sit, but ut non obset*; not that it should not be, but that it should not hurt. Death has lost its sting, that it cannot annoy; it has lost its terror, that it cannot amaze; it has lost its power, that it cannot destroy. Observe, 3. The victors or conquerors over this enemy—who are first Christ, and then all that are Christ's, all that harvest of which Christ is the first-fruits. Observe, 4. The triumph proclaimed, *Thanks be to God which giveth us*

the victory. From the whole learn, That all believers are victorious over death, through our Lord Jesus Christ. They may triumph over death through Christ, because he has disarmed it by his death and satisfaction, he has destroyed it by his resurrection; and Christ's victories become the believer's by participation and communion with him. As they communicate with him in the value of his satisfaction, so they communicate with him in the virtue of his resurrection. Let us therefore triumph with the apostle, and say, *Thanks be to God; with the prophet, Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust.* Thus victory was won by Christ, it is won by us; it was dear to Christ: it is cheap to us: we overcome, but it is by the blood of the Lamb. Let us therefore, living and dying, say, *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Here our apostle concludes this chapter, and closes his discourse on this great subject, the doctrine of the body's resurrection, with an exhortation to duty. *Be ye stedfast*; that is, in the faith of the gospel in general, and in the belief of this particular article of our Christian faith, the resurrection of the dead. *Unmoveable*; that is, be not moved by any temptations or tribulations, either from the faith and hope of the gospel, or, from obedience to the gospel. Let no fear of the cross of Christ make you weary of the yoke of Christ. *Always abounding in the work of the Lord.* Here note, That the more steady and stedfast any man is in the belief of a blessed resurrection, the more forward and zealous, the more active and industrious, will he be in the service of the work of God. *Forasmuch as your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*; that is, your painfulness in the service of God shall be plentifully recompensed by him at the resurrection of the just. Where, note, 1. The nature and quality of that service, or work of God declared, it is a *labour*; the vast circumference of a Christian's duty makes it so; the curious and exact manner in and after which every duty must be performed, makes it so; the great opposition that he meets with in his duty, makes it so. But the greater their labour is on earth, the sweeter will their rest be in heaven. Note, 2. The reward that sweetens this labour: *It shall not be in vain*; there is the transcendency of the reward. *Forasmuch as ye know*; there is the certainty

of it. The Christian's services for Christ shall be certainly and transcendently rewarded by Christ in another world. His labour is finite, his reward is infinite. There is no more proportion between a Christian's labour and reward, than betwixt time and eternity. O infinite glory, the reward of our poor labour.

CHAP. XVI.

Our apostle, in this concluding chapter of his excellent epistle, gives the Corinthians several useful directions for their acceptable performance of some needful duties; and then shuts up the whole with particular salutations to them, and with his hearty wishes for a multiplied increase of all spiritual and temporal blessings upon them.

NOW concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

The first duty which the apostle here directs the Corinthians to, is the making a collection for the poor: and particularly for them at Jerusalem, who were now in great straits, by reason of a famine which was then and there amongst them, as some expositors affirm. He advises that on the Lord's day every one should lay something by, as God had prospered him, that there might be no need of farther collections when he came: and that the charity might be distributed according to their pious intentions, he tells them, they shall send it by messengers of their own; and that if they judged it meet and needful, he would accompany the bearers of their charity, and assist in the distribution of it. Here note, 1. The great duty which the apostle directs unto: *care of, and provision for, the poor saints at Jerusalem.* To relieve the poor members of Christ, especially such as suffer for his name's sake, is a necessary, yea, important duty. We evidence our love and affection to the Head, by our pity and compassion to the members. The charitable contributions of such churches as are in and under better circumstances, towards those that are in worse, especially if in want, is an odour of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing unto God, Phil. iv. 18. Note, 2. The time when he

advises them to make this charitable collection for the poor: upon the first day of the week, which was the day of their public assemblies, the day upon which our Lord rose again from the dead. Divines, both ancient and modern, do from hence argue for the change of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week. It is evident that this was the day on which the Christian churches constantly assembled to perform religious worship, and read the scriptures, to preach the word, and celebrate the Lord's supper; and it was called by them, the Lord's day. Upon this day the apostle orders the collections to be made for the poor: and all Christians, in compliance with this precept, did offer their alms upon that day. Learn hence, That works of charity and mercy, though needful and acceptable every day, yet are the proper duties of the Lord's day, that being a day separated and set apart for sacred works, of which charity is a special part. Add to this, that the day itself doth contain a special motive in it to excite and enlarge our charity, it being the day in which we were begotten to a lively hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, of an inheritance incorruptible; and the day upon which we partake of our Lord's most precious body and blood. We having therefore received spiritual things so plentifully from Christ, ought to be the more ready to impart our temporal things to distressed Christians. Note, 3. The apostle's bidding every one to lay by something of his store for the relief of others, intimates to us, that God has given unto every one of us a special, proper, and personal right to what we do enjoy. To have all things common, would run all things into confusion. The apostle directing the Corinthians here to a constant use of their charity every Lord's day, in making collections for the poor, doth suppose that they had something of their own to give. Almighty God doth keep up the eighth commandment in full force and strength, as a fence and hedge about the worldly estates of men; and he that goes about to break this hedge, a serpent shall bite him. If there be no such thing as property, how shall we exercise charity? Note, 4. The rule which St. Paul directs the Corinthians to observe and follow in the distribution of their charity, namely, to lay by for others in proportion as God had blessed and prospered them. The good which we do must be proportionable to what we receive. God will not accept of a little, when he has given us an ability to do much: we must always relieve the wants of others as we are able, and some-

times above what we are able. Such as have ability ought to abound in all kinds of charity; they are to add charity to charity, one way of charity to another, and one work of charity to another: otherwise, though they may do a good work, yet they are not rich in good works. *Let every one lay by in store, as God hath prospered him.* Note, 5. How desirous the apostle was that the Corinthians should receive all possible satisfaction in the prudent distribution of their collected charity. He proposes to them to choose messengers of their own to carry their contribution; he proffers to give them letters of recommendation to the saints at Jerusalem; nay, if need require, and they desire it, he is ready to go himself upon this charitable errand. So ready are the ministers of God upon all occasions to contribute their utmost endeavours to promote the charitable relief of the poor members of Jesus Christ: *If need be I will go also.*

5 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. 6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go. 7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. 8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are many adversaries.*

Observe here, St. Paul acquaints them how he had laid his business, ordered his stay and station, where he was, and designed afterwards to come and winter with them, and not to see them in passage only. From whence we learn, That a wise contrivance of our own business, of our course of labour, and of what we design to do, is very lawful, provided it be done with submission to the will of God. The apostle declares that he had in his intentions contrived, whither to go, where to stay, how long to continue: but adds, *If the Lord permit.* All was with submission to the wisdom and will of God. Farther, he informs them of his present intention to stay at Ephesus till Pentecost, because God had opened there unto him a great door for the propagation of the gospel, and had abundantly blessed his labours to the good of many. But there were *many adversaries* of the truth there, which made his stay longer at Ephesus both necessary and unavoidable. Learn thence, that the great success

of the gospel is usually attended with many adversaries, and great opposition. The devil stirs up all the rage and fury he can against the professors, but especially the preachers of the gospel: but where the devil is most angry, we may hope we have done most good: and that ought to encourage us to stay in our place, though our difficulties are many, and our discouragements great. *I will tarry at Ephesus, where a great door is opened to me, though there are many adversaries.*

10 Now if Timothy come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. 11 Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.

Observe here, 1. Though Timothy was a young minister, and St. Paul an aged apostle, yet doth he bespeak the church to pay respect unto him as to himself, he being a minister of the gospel as well as himself, though far inferior to him in years and abilities. None of the faithful ministers of Christ are ambitious to engross any respect from the people to themselves, but content, yea desirous, that all their fellow-brethren should share with them therein; for all men pretend to a share in reputation, and do not love to see it monopolized by a single person, and every wise and good man rejoices when that respect is given to others which is justly due and payable to their worth and merit. Observe, 2. How affectionately this aged apostle recommends Timothy to the church's tender care, as well as to their deserved respect: *See that he may be without fear;* that is, without fear of disturbance from the factions that were amongst them at Corinth: see that he be not exposed to any trouble or danger from any party whatsoever. *Let no man despise him;* either because of his youth, or his bodily weakness and infirmities, or for any other cause whatsoever. *But conduct him forth in peace;* bring him on his way towards me, and provide for the necessities of his journey. O! how happy is it when the ministers of Christ are thus careful of, and solicitous for, the welfare of each other, as St. Paul here was for Timothy!

12 As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time:

but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

Here again observe, 1. How respectfully this great apostle speaks of Apollos, an inferior minister in the church of Corinth, *Our brother Apollos*. Nothing better becomes the governors and pastors of the church than humility and condescension, sincere love and affection, a due deference and regard towards those who are underlabourers in our Lord's vineyard, to own and treat them as brethren, co-workers and fellow-helpers with them. God has not made his ministers lions to tear one another, nor bulls to gore each other; but shepherds to watch over, and nurses to cherish, one another: *Our brother Apollos*. Observe, 2. How St. Paul, though a dignified person, a great apostle, left Apollos, an inferior minister of the gospel, to judge for himself, whether he had best go to Corinth, or forbear: *I desired him to come to you, but his will was not to come*. He did not suspend him, or silence him, for not obeying the voice of an apostle: but lets him take his choice. There may be, and sometimes are, particular cases and circumstances relating to ourselves and our people, (as about going from them, or continuing with them,) which none can adjust and determine as well as ourselves. Perhaps Apollos here had greater and stronger reasons for his refusing, than St. Paul had for his requesting him, to go to Corinth: however, the great apostle only desired him to go, not censuring him for his denial, but leaving him to the determination of himself, *whose will was not at all to come to them at that time*. Observe, 3. What might probably be the reason why Apollos had no inclination to go to Corinth at this time; no, not at the solicitation of St. Paul himself. Perhaps it was because he would not encourage or give the least countenance to a faction which was there begun under the authority of his name, 1 Cor. i. 12. Some said, *I am of Apollos*. A pious and prudent minister of Jesus Christ seeks not his own applause, or his people's admiration; but what he does is with a special respect to their edification in holiness, for preserving unity, and promoting love among each other. Afterwards, when St. Paul had by his epistle allayed those heats, and healed those divisions which prevailed amongst them, we find Apollos did return to Corinth, and was no doubt very acceptable to them, and serviceable among them.

18 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Three duties are here exhorted to, namely, watchfulness, steadfastness in the faith,

and holy fortitude and courage. 1. Watchfulness, a necessary and daily duty; we cannot be safe one moment without it: something we must watch over, something we must watch against, and something we must watch for. We must watch over our thoughts, our words, our actions; we must watch against all sin, all appearance of sin, all temptations to sin, all occasions of sinning; we must watch for all opportunities of glorifying God, all opportunities of doing good to others. 2. Steadfastness in the faith; perseverance in the faith of Christ, and steadfastness in his holy religion, is the great and indispensable duty of every Christian that has a due regard to his soul's salvation: *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith*: 3. Christian fortitude and holy courage: *Quit yourselves like men, be strong*. Where we have the Christian's spiritual enemies supposed and implied, sin, Satan, and the world; and his duty declared, and himself encouraged to play the man in opposing, or contending with, and striving against, them. Verily, a Christian above all men needs courage and resolution; he can do nothing as a Christian, but it is an act of valour; it requires much more courage to be a Christian than to be a captain. Alas! how many of the valiant sword-men of the world have showed themselves mere cowards, who have come out of the field with victory, and banners displayed; but after all lived and died slaves at home, slaves to their base lusts! It requires more prowess, more bravery and greatness of spirit, to conquer ourselves, than to command an army of men. Therefore *quit ye like men, be strong*.

14 Let all your things be done with charity.

Our apostle having in the beginning of this epistle proved the Corinthians for their uncharitable schisms and unchristian divisions; he concludes his epistle with this excellent rule of advice, To do all things in love, one for and one towards another. Where a true principle of Christian charity prevails amongst the members of a church, it will cast out selfishness, pride, envy, and division; and keep them from rash censuring, despising, and abusing one another, and also from separating from the communion of each other. The sum of all the commandments, both towards God and towards our neighbour, is love; it is not praying, hearing, or receiving at the Lord's table, which is the fulfilling of the commandment, but when these duties are done in love; and we may do many things commanded towards men, yet if we do them not in love to men, we do

nothing as the Lord commanded; therefore *let all things be done with charity.*

15 I beseech you, brethren, ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia, and *that* they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, 16 That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with *us*, and labour-eth.

Observe here, 1. The honourable mention which St. Paul makes of Stephanas, and his house; they were the first fruits of Achaia, that is, the first there converted to Christianity. It is a great honour to be in Christ before others: happy they that come in at the call of Christ, even at the last hour; but thrice happy those that come in at the first, who are the first-ripe fruits unto God. Observe, 2. What good proof and evidence Stephanas gave of the sincerity of his early conversion: *He addicted himself to the ministry of the saints*; that is, he was very forward to assist the poor saints with his estate and labour. There is no better evidence of our interest in Christ than an entire affection and operative compassion towards all our fellow-members in Christ, for grace's sake. Observe, 3. The great deference and regard, the special respect and honour, which was due, and is here commanded to be paid, to Stephanas, for his ministering to the poor saints that were in want: *Submit yourselves unto such*: that is, give reverence and honour to them, and to all such as are like unto them, who laboured with the apostle in the furthering of the gospel.

17 I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus; for that which is lacking on your part they have supplied. 18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

It is very probable that the faithful in the church of Corinth did send these three persons, namely, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, to St. Paul, at this time at Ephesus, to acquaint him with the state of the church, the rents and schisms that were amongst them; and to desire the interposition of his authority, and the exercise of his apostolical power, in order to the healing of those unhappy breaches. Now, says the apostle, I am glad of the coming of these men, whom you sent with your letters of inquiry to me; for that account of your affairs which was lacking on your

parts in your letter, they have supplied: I am glad, I say, for they have refreshed my spirit with their presence and discourse, and will at their return refresh yours also; therefore *acknowledge ye them that are such*, own their services, and honour them for the same. There is a tribute of double honour, respect, and reverence, due and payable to such as labour in the church's services even unto weariness, and are willing to spend and be spent in such services as they are capable of, for the benefit of the church in general, or any member thereof in particular.

19 The churches of Asia salute you, Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. 20 All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss. 21 The salutation of *me* Paul with mine own hand.

Here our apostle closes, his epistle with several salutations to the Corinthians, from the churches of Asia, from Aquila and Priscilla, and from the church in their house, that is, from the Christian family, or from the Christian assembly which used to meet in their house for the worshipping of God. Happy that family-governor who has a church in his house, with Aquila and Priscilla; who worships God with all his house, as did Cornelius; who with his household serves the Lord, as did Joshua; who commands his children and his household after him, as did faithful Abraham. Observe, 2. The nature and manner of this salutation, *They salute you in the Lord*; that is, with a spiritual affection, for the grace of God that is in you, and wishing you an overflowing stream of spiritual blessings from Christ the fountain. Next he wills them to salute one another with an holy kiss, a kiss of peace and charity; with which Christians in those times, and according to the custom of those countries, used to salute one another. This was not then a wanton, but an holy, kiss, in which they had chaste and holy thoughts; yet afterwards the piety and purity of the church degenerating and declining, it was thought fit and convenient to lay the kiss of charity aside, which was used in the public assemblies at the celebration of the holy communion. That which is innocent in itself, and pious in its first intentment, may in time fall under such abuse, as to cause it to be wholly laid aside. Lastly, he adds his own salutation with his own hand. It is generally believed that the apostle employed some person to write his epistle over, which he sent abroad unto

the churches; yet that he might prevent fraud and forgery, and that they might know which were his own, he used to subscribe his salutation and apostolical benediction with his own hand, which was well known unto them.

22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha.

This is, if any man do either oppose Christ and his gospel, or apostatize and backslide from his holy profession, and thereby discover he had no sincere love for Christ, let him be accursed till the Lord comes to judgment; and when he comes to judgment, let him without repentance lie under a dreadful, yea, an eternal curse. Observe here, How that those who do not sincerely love our Lord Jesus Christ, are under the heaviest and bitterest of divine curses. Note, 1. The ground or cause of this curse, the not loving of Jesus Christ; he doth not say, If any man hate Christ, or reproach and blaspheme him, or persecute and injure him; but, if he doth not love him. The bare want of this affection to Christ, is enough eternally to separate us from Christ. Note, 2. The nature of this curse: *Let him be Anathema Maran-atha.* The apostle pronounces the curse in two languages, Greek and Syriac, to denote both the vehemency of his own spirit in speaking, and the certainty of the thing spoken: or perhaps to show that men of all nations and languages who love not Christ, are under a curse, and that they are deservedly cursed among all nations. The Greek word, *Anathema*, signifies execrable; the Syriac word, *Maran-atha*, is a compound of *Maran*, Lord, and *atha*, he cometh. These words were used anciently in the most dreadful sentence of excommunication; as if they had cited the person to the tribunal of Christ, at his coming to judge

the world, or left him bound under the curse of that sentence until the coming of Christ. Note, 3. The extent of this curse, *If any man*; as if he had said, Let him be who he will that loves not Christ, Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female, rich or poor, young or old, prince or peasant, king or beggar, who have opportunities to know Christ and yet do not love him, let him be accursed by him to eternal ages; let him be fully separated from the society of Christians here in this world, and from all fellowship and communion with Christ finally in the world to come.

The sum is, That those who love not our Lord Jesus Christ, much more those who wilfully hate and oppose him and his holy laws, are accursed persons in this life, and devoted to destruction here: but when our Lord shall come to judge the world at the last and great day, they shall be accursed more openly and solemnly; when they shall stand before that impartial judge of the world, they shall receive from his mouth a final malediction, an irreversible execration, which shall be immediately succeeded with the anguish and torments of eternity.

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. 24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Observe here, Our apostle's valediction; it is a benediction. He takes his farewell of them with prayer for them: *The grace, or gracious favour, of Christ be with you, and multiply all blessings, both spiritual and temporal, upon you*; I am sure I love you all in Christ Jesus, and for his sake. Happy is it when ministers can take their farewell of their flocks in this manner, with fervent supplication for them, and with solemn, yet serious, protestations of the fervency of their love, and the ardency of their affection towards them. Amen.

THE
SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
CORINTHIANS.

The occasion of St. Paul's writing this second Epistle to the Corinthians, was to vindicate his person from divers imputations which were charged upon him by the false apostles, and to defend his ministry and apostleship against some that sought to bring both himself and that into disgrace and contempt: such ministers as study, and 'seek that they may excel to the edifying of the church,' must expect to encounter with the violent opposition and virulent imputations of men of perverse minds, who either cannot or will not do so well themselves.

Our great Apostle here was charged by the false apostles with inconstancy, in promising to come to Corinth, and not coming; with pride and imperiousness, with vanity and vain-glory, in reference to the inconstant persons; they represented him as contemptible in his person, as despicable in his ministry. He therefore confutes, yea, confounds, his adversaries by a new and unusual way of arguing; namely, by boasting of his sufferings, glorying in them, and giving a large catalogue and long inventory of them: he displays his calamities, blazons his crosses, vindicates his person and authority from contempt, clears himself from the charge and imputation of levity and vain-glory, by rehearsing the good services he had done, and the sufferings he had undergone, for the sake of CHRIST, and his holy religion. Whence we learn, That it is neither unchristian or unseemly to enlarge upon our own actions and sufferings when there is a great and necessary occasion so to do, namely, when the glory of God, the credit of our holy religion, and a just vindication of our own integrity and innocence, doth require it, and call for it.

CHAP. I.

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. The writer of this epistle described by his name, *Paul*; by his office, *an apostle of Jesus Christ*; with the manner how he obtained this office of an apostle, namely, *by the will of God*; it was not man, but God, that called him to the apostleship. It is of great concern and consequence both to ministers and people to be fully informed, and thoroughly satisfied, of that divine call which our spiritual guides have to come amongst them; that the ministers may be able to say, "We come to you in the name of the Lord;" and the people may be able to reply: "We receive you as ambassadors from the Lord unto us." *Paul, an apostle by the will of God.* Observe, 2. A person conjoined with St. Paul in the writing of this epistle, and he is also described two ways; by his name,

Timothy; by his relation, *our brother*. Where note, The great humility and condescension of St. Paul, that though far superior to Timothy in years, and more transcendent in office, and more eminent in grace, yet he doth not assume and arrogate *all* to himself, but makes another sit, as it were, upon the throne with him; so humble and condescending was this holy man to one so far inferior to him, both in office and grace. Note also, The happy advantage of Timothy in being with St. Paul, and having the happy privilege of being instructed and directed by so great an apostle; happy was it for young Timothy that ever he came into old Paul's family. Learn thence, That it is an happy advantage to such who in their younger years are dedicated to, and designed to be set apart for, the work of the ministry, to be under the inspection and care, the guidance and conduct, of those who are more aged, and better experienced than themselves: *Paul an apostle, and Timothy our brother.* Observe, 2. The persons to whom this epistle is written and directed; *To the church of God which is at Corinth*. Corinth was a city famous for wealth and riches, but most infamous for lewdness

and uncleanness: here was a temple dedicated to Venus, where were a thousand virgins set apart to be prostituted to the lusts of men; so that *Kopovdualav*, to Corinthians, is as much as to be lascivious and unchaste; and after many of them were converted to Christianity, yet did the sin of uncleanness so much abound amongst them, that the apostle doth industriously set himself against it, and warns them of the sin and danger of it, in both his epistles wrote unto them. However, as bad as Corinth was, God told Paul, *Acts xvii.* that he had much people in that city; and accordingly he spent a year and a half amongst them, in preaching to them, in converting and confirming them. Learn thence, That even amongst the most profane and unlikeliest people upon earth, God may, and sometimes doth, gather a church unto himself. See what monsters of men these Corinthians were, *1 Cor. vi. 11. Whoremongers, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind*; and he tells them, not only such persons, but *such things*, were some of them: *but now washed, &c.* O the sovereignty and wonderful efficacy of the grace of God, in cleansing souls more black than ever was Ethiopian's face! Though man cannot, yet God can, and sometimes does, cause figs to grow on thorns, and grapes on thistles. Observe, 4. Our apostle's salutation of, and prayer for, this church at Corinth: *Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Whence note, 1. The mercies and blessings prayed for: grace and peace; spiritual blessings, and comprehensive blessings. Note, 2. The original cause and spring from whence those blessings flow, from God our Father, and from Jesus Christ; from the Father as the fountal cause, and from Christ as the procuring cause, the dispenser of these blessings. A good argument to prove the divinity of Christ: he that can dispense grace and peace, of and from himself, is God; but Christ doth this, therefore he is God: *Grace be to you, and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ.*

3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

Observe here, 1. The several gracious and comfortable titles which the apostle

gives to Almighty God; he styles him, 1. *The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; so he is by nature; and Christ his Son by eternal and ineffable generation: for as the words, *our Lord*, ascribed here to Christ, do not exclude the Father from being Lord; so the word *God*, ascribed here to God the Father, excludes not Christ from being our God; and as God is the Father of Christ, so he is a Father in him to all that have union with him. 2. *The Father of mercies*; a most amiable and comfortable relation; not the Father of mercy, or a merciful Father, barely, but the Father of mercies in the plural number to denote the greatness and multitude of his mercies, and that all mercy flows from him only and freely, as streams from an overflowing and never-failing fountain. 3. *The God of all comfort*; because by giving his holy Spirit, the Comforter, he is the author of all that consolation which is conferred upon us. Observe, 2. The duty here performed by the apostle, that of blessing God, or thanksgiving, *Blessed be God, &c.* Learn, That blessing and praising God for all mercies, but especially for spiritual mercies, is a duty which all the people of God ought especially to be careful of, and abounding in: the more you shall have cause to bless him, he will multiply blessings upon you for your thankfulness to him. Observe, 3. The particular favour which the apostle blesses and praises God for; namely, for *comforting his children in all their tribulations.* Learn hence, That as God is the only comforter of his people at all times, so he is their best comforter in the worst of times. There is no tribulation or affliction that the people of God can fall into, but God can and will comfort them therein: *Blessed be God, who comforteth us in all our tribulations.* Observe, 4. The gracious end and merciful design of God in comforting his saints and servants, in and under all their pressures, tribulations, and afflictions; it is, *That they may be able to comfort them which are in trouble, by the comfort wherewith they themselves have been comforted of God.* Learn hence, That God doth often exercise many of his ministers, and some of his particular saints and servants, in a very exemplary manner, with trials and afflictions; for this great end amongst others, that they may be experimentally able to instruct and comfort such, who either are or may hereafter fall into the same disconsolate condition with themselves; none so fit to advise and counsel, to instruct and comfort, a suffering saint, as an afflicted minister or Christian, who have, together with their afflictions, experienced the favour of divine consolations.

That we may comfort others, as we ourselves have been comforted of God.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

Note here, 1. That the saints' sufferings are called the *sufferings of Christ*. The head suffers in the members, because the members suffer for the sake of the head. Note, 2. That the saints' sufferings in the cause, and for the sake of Christ, are sometimes overflowing and excessive sufferings: *The sufferings of Christ abound in us*. Note, 4. That as a Christian's sufferings are for Christ, so are their comforts and consolations from him; yea, their comforts do bear some proportion to their sufferings; as our sufferings abound, so our consolation abounds by Christ.

6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

As if the apostle had said, "What sufferings soever I have met with in my ministerial office, you have the benefit of them, and special advantage by them; and therefore you ought not to despise me upon the account of my sufferings, (as do the false prophets, and would have you do,) but you ought the more to honour me for them, and be encouraged yourselves by them; and when I am comforted, it is beneficial for your consolation, inasmuch as you may confidently expect the same relief." Learn hence, That the sufferings and afflictions which we endure for Christ, do not only turn to our own good, but redound greatly to the good and benefit of the church of God, and consequently should not disanimate or dishearten our fellow-Christians, but rather be matter of comfort or consolation to them. *If we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation*: he adds, *If we be comforted, it is for your consolation also*; thereby plainly intimating to us, that Almighty God doth by all his dispensations, both of mercy and correction, promote and carry on the salvation of his own children and people.

7 And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

Here St. Paul tells the body of the Corinthians, that he had a good hope concerning them, that as they had endured

sufferings for Christ, so they would still endure them; assuring them, that they should share no less in consolation than they did in affliction. Learn hence, That such as suffer for Christ, or own those that suffer for him, shall be interested in all that joy and consolation which such sufferings and sufferers shall receive from God: *As you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be of the consolation also*.

8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.

Observe here, 1. That it is of no small benefit and advantage, but of excellent use to us, to know what are the troubles and afflictions which do befall the servants of God for righteousness' sake: *We would not have you ignorant of our trouble*. Observe, 2. How pressing the troubles and afflictions were which this apostle underwent: *they were out of measure, above strength, and even to the despairing of life*. Thence note, That God may, and sometimes does, exercise his servants with such extreme and pressing trials, that all their own natural strength is unable to support them under them, or carry them through them: *We were pressed above strength, and despaired even of life*.

9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

Observe here, The great and imminent danger which the apostle was in: his very life was in a hazard, nay, even despaired of; he looked upon himself as a dead man: but when he had thus sentenced himself, a divine power, which wrought above all his thoughts and rational conjectures, relieved him, and revived him. Hence learn, that the almighty power of God sometimes works beyond all creature expectations, beyond all human probabilities, beyond all rational conjectures, to help and deliver his people in hopeless and helpless trouble.

10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

Observe here, The deliverer, God; the delivered, St. Paul, and the saints that were in Asia with him; the deliverance itself, or the imminent and impending evil delivered from, *death, great death, so great a death*. Learn, 1. That in times of great

and imminent danger, God, and God alone, is the immediate deliverer of his children and people. Learn, 2. That it is the property of a gracious heart to magnify and enhance the deliverance of a gracious God: *He hath delivered us from so great a death, &c.* Learn, 3. That past and present experience of God's power and goodness towards his people may and ought to encourage them to trust in him for time to come: former experience ought to encourage us to future dependence; when we can say, God hath delivered, and doth deliver, let our faith add, *In him we trust that he will yet deliver.*

11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift *bestowed* upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

Our apostle having commemorated the goodness and power of God in former deliverances, and expressed his assurance of present and future deliverances, doth in this verse excite and exhort the faithful at Corinth to help and further him with their prayers: *You also helping together by prayer for us.* Where observe, The humility of the apostle in desiring the people's prayers for himself. Such as are most eminent in gifts and office, yea, and in grace too, do really want, and heartily desire, the help and benefits of their prayers who are far inferior to them in the church of God. And verily the people do owe unto their spiritual guides, as a debt of service, their earnest prayers for them; herein they are not only serviceable to them, but kind to themselves. Observe farther, The great reason why St. Paul was so desirous of the Corinthians' prayers; that deliverance and mercy being obtained thereby, praise and thanksgiving might be rendered to God on his behalf. Learn, That when by prayer any mercy is obtained by us, it is our duty by praise and thanksgiving to acknowledge the same to God. What is obtained by prayer, should be owned by thankfulness; God forbid we should be clamorous in asking favours, and dumb and tongue-tied in returning thanks.

12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

Observe here, 1. That though St. Paul did not put confidence and trust in his sin-

cerity and Christian grace, yet he did rejoice, and holily glory, in the evidence of his grace, and in the testimony of a sincere and upright conscience: *Our rejoicing is this.* Learn hence, That an holy glorying and rejoicing in the grace of God, which upon good and sufficient grounds we find evident in ourselves, is lawful and allowable. A Christian may and ought to rejoice not only in the confidence of Christ's merits, but also in the conscience of his own sincerity. Observe, 2. The particular grace evidenced, which the apostle took comfort in: *his sincerity and godly simplicity*; that is, his uprightness both of heart and life, his freedom from guile and hypocrisy. Thence note, That the conscience of sincerity is such a crown of rejoicing, as will support a Christian's spirit under and against the greatest difficulties which may arise in any condition. This sincerity discovers itself in its acting by a right rule, from a right principle, and to a right end; and it supports a man's spirit in the duty of prayer under the burden of slander and reproach, in the dark night of affliction, in the disconsolate hour of death, and at the dreadful day of judgment. Observe, 3. That it is not a single act of sincerity, but a constant course of upright walking, that our apostle rejoiced and took comfort in: *We have had our conversation in the world in all simplicity and godly sincerity.* It is not a single action, but a series of good actions, that administers comfort: as God doth not judge of our state and condition by a particular action, no more should we, but by the general bent of our resolutions, and the constant course and tenor of our conversations: *Our rejoicing is this, that by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world.*

13 For we write none other things unto you than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end:

The apostle having asserted his own sincerity and upright conversation in the former verse, he doth in this verse make his appeal to the consciences of the Corinthians for his justification. It is a good demonstration of our uprightness, when we can not only appeal to God as touching our sincerity, but dare appeal to the consciences of men; for if through prejudice they will not with their mouths vouch our integrity, yet secretly with their conscience they cannot but bear witness to it. Observe, 2. The apostle's having declared that he had his testimonials not only from his own conscience, but from theirs also; he adds, that he trusted this would hold and com-

tinue even to the end, that is, to the end both of his and their lives. As if the apostle had said, "My conversation hath hitherto been acknowledged by you to be sincere and upright; and I hope, as you shall never see it otherwise by me, so you will persevere and continue in your good opinion and right judgment concerning me to the end of your and my life."

14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Observe here, 1. The great trial which St. Paul met with from the Corinthians, whose spiritual father he was: though he had served them with great faithfulness, yet they did *acknowledge him but in part*. There was a time when he was high in their esteem. Who but Paul! None but he! but now a great part leave him, and admire others. Learn hence, What great levity, fickleness, and inconstancy, may be found in good men in general; and what great mutability and changeableness of affection in particular to their ministers and spiritual guides, though never so sincere and faithful. Although St. Paul, with a laborious diligence, and divine success, had planted and propagated the Christian faith amongst them; yet now not only his person, but his very office, falls under contempt by many of them. None more than ministers do experience this truth, that nothing is so mutable as the mind of man. Though ministers are the same, and their message the same; though they continue burning and shining lights, though they burn out, and consume life, health, and estate, among and for their people; yet it is only for a season, for an hour, for a short time, at their first coming amongst them, that they rejoice in their light: *You have acknowledged us in part*. Observe, 2. That notwithstanding the contempt cast upon St. Paul by some in the church of Corinth, yet there were others among them who did greatly rejoice in him, and bless God for him, and he for them: *We are your rejoicing, and ye are ours*, as being converted by us; and I trust we shall be a farther joy and mutual rejoicing each to other in the day of our Lord Jesus. Learn hence, What unspeakable rejoicings and joyful congratulations there will be in the day of Christ, between laborious faithful ministers and their believing obedient hearers. "Lord! will the Christian say, this was the blessed instrument, under God, of my happy illumination and conversion; by the blessing of the Spirit upon his ministry, my soul was begotten unto Christ." But

on the other hand, if we be ignorant or lazy, unskilful or unfaithful, in our office, our people will come in against us as swift witnesses in the day of Christ: and, Lord, what an intolerable aggravation will it be of our misery in hell, to have any of our people thus upbraiding us! "O cruel man! that sawest my soul in danger, but never dealt faithfully and plainly with me; the same time that we spent together in sin and vanity, in sensual mirth and jollity, might have been instrumental to save us both from this place of torment." Let ministers consider themselves as witnesses for God, and their people as witnesses for or against them; and under that consideration, so study, preach, and pray; so live, walk, and act, that they may, with this great apostle, take God to record, that they are free from the blood of all men.

15 And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before that ye might have a second benefit;

Observe here, 1. The apostle's steady purpose, and fixed resolution, to come and spend some time amongst the Corinthians: *I was minded to come unto you*. Where a faithful minister has good hopes and confidence of doing good amongst a people, there is great encouragement for coming to them, and abiding with them. When the ministers of Christ find that God has farther converting work, or edifying work, for them to do in a particular place amongst his people, they will not, they must not, yea, they dare not, forsake them for outward advantages. Observe, 2. The end of St. Paul's purpose and resolution to come unto them: *That they might have a second benefit*. The first benefit was their conversion, the second benefit was their confirmation; confirmation in the faith, and reformation both in life and manners. It is not sufficient that by our ministry we plant a church, and gather a people out of the world, by external and visible profession; but there is farther need of daily industry, and continual care to water what we have planted, to cultivate and dress that corner of our Lord's vineyard which is under our particular inspection and care. O that our people had hearts to cry out, and say, Lord! not the first time only, but the second, yea, all my life, make me partaker of this benefit.

16 And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea.

Observe here, 1. How the heart of this

holy apostle was carried forth in the service of God and souls, and how accordingly he orders all his journeys from one place to another, and determines his continuance and stay, longer in one place than another, as the glory of God, the advantage of the gospel, and the church's necessities, did require: *I design to pass by you into Macedonia, &c.* It is the duty of the ministers of Christ not only to lay out themselves for the glory of God, and the good of souls, but to project, forecast, and contrive how they may do it in the best and most advantageous manner, for the furtherance of the gospel. Yet, 2. Observe the difference between this extraordinary apostle then, and ordinary pastor of the church now. The apostles had an universal commission to plant churches in all places; they were to be in constant travels up and down the world, itinerary preachers from place to place; but the office of an ordinary pastor now is, to watch over a particular flock, and to keep constant residence amongst them. Yet though by actual relation he is tied and bound to a particular flock, he is by habitual and aptitudinal disposition a minister of the universal church, and a debtor to the public good thereof. He is first made a minister in the universal church, and then a pastor of a particular congregation; and accordingly, though he seeks to serve the interest of his own flock first, yet it is his duty, by prayer, by study, by preaching, by writing, by all other edifying ways and methods, to promote the universal good and benefit of the whole church of Christ according to his power, both far and near.

17. When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay?

Here our apostle begins to make his apology and defence for himself, for changing his purpose in coming to Corinth according to promise, and to free himself from the imputation of levity, inconstancy, and falsehood, cast upon him by his back friends, the false apostles, for promising to come to Corinth, and not performing it; for they aggravated the matter so far, as if he were one that said and unsaid, one that took no care about keeping his word; and thence inferred, that no regard was to be had to any thing that he delivered. "He that is not to be relied upon, say the false apostles, in his ordinary promises, how can you depend upon what he says to you in his preaching?" Hence learn, That light-

ness and inconstancy is a great sin and reproach in any, but especially in the ministers of the gospel, who yet are often charged with it, when they are in no degree guilty of it. Observe, 2. As our apostle frees himself from the charge of inconstancy, so from the suspicion of acting for worldly advantage: *The things which I purpose do I purpose according to the flesh?* that is, for carnal ends or secular interest, that with me there should be now, Yea, Yea, and anon, Nay, Nay? Behold here what truth and steadiness was found in and with our holy apostle; how his words and intentions, his tongue and his heart, his pen and his purpose, were one, namely, in reality to come unto them, though he was providentially hindered and obstructed. Here let us remark and note, what little things the men of the world will take advantage from, to vilify and lessen the reputation of God's faithful servants, especially his ministers. How many persons might have promised to be in such a place at such a time, and have failed, without being reproached for breach of promise! The world would have been so charitable to another person, as to have excused it, by saying, "The man spake according to his present intention and resolution, but was hindered by the providence of God;" but if Paul fails in a little, he must be loaded presently, upbraided for his inconstancy, or which is worse, charged with playing fast and loose for sinister ends, and worldly advantages. Lord! give thy servants, especially thy ministers, wisdom to walk with exactness and circumspection before the men of the world, who are their watchful observers, and bold censurers, that they may cut off all occasion from them that seek occasion against them.

18 But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

By the word here, some understand St. Paul's promise to come to Corinth, that he did very seriously intend to come unto them; as if he had said, "As God is true to his promise, so has he taught me to be true to mine." Others understand by the word, St. Paul's preaching, that his doctrine was not mutable and changeable, but always the same. Here note, How ready and forward the adversaries of religion are from any real or supposed imperfections in the ministers of God, presently to blame and burden their ministry, to charge their private errors and mistakes upon their doctrine. There is a mighty propensity and great forwardness in bad men, to cast all the imperfections of the ministers of the gospel upon their ministry and doctrine.

The devil is glad of an opportunity, by the failings of preachers, to bring the doctrines they preach either into doubt or disesteem. But though it be a great reproach for a minister to be mutable and contradictory in his doctrine, yet the wicked world do often accuse them of it, and charge them with it, when there is not the least occasion of it: *Verily, as God is true, our word was not yea and nay.*

19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, *even* by me and Sylvanus, and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.

This verse contains a new argument for the constancy and immutability of St. Paul's doctrine, drawn from the subject matter of his preaching; namely, *Jesus Christ*. As Christ is always one and the same, whom himself and other ministers did preach, so is our doctrine one and the same also. Note here, 1. The subject matter of St. Paul's preaching, what was the sum of his own and his companion's sermons, (Sylvanus and Timotheus,) it was not his own imagination, or the Jewish rites and ceremonies, but Christ in his nature and offices; *The Son of God, Jesus Christ, was preached among you by us.* Note, 2. The happy unity and accord which was found among all these ministers, St. Paul, Sylvanus, and Timotheus, in preaching Christ. O blessed agreement! when all the ministers of God with one consent conspire and agree to advance and extol our Lord Jesus Christ. Note, 3. That the course of St. Paul's and his assistants' preaching: *Christ Jesus*, fixedly and unchangeably the same; not *yea* at one time, and *nay* at another. Learn thence, That it is a proper note of God's truth, and the true preachers thereof, that they are always one and the same, always yea, and not yea and nay; there is no change or contrariety in their doctrines.

20 For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Our apostle had proved in the foregoing verse the constancy of his own doctrine which he preached from the immutability and constancy of Christ, the subject of it. Here he proveth Christ to be unchangeable, in that all the promises which God hath made to us are fulfilled both in him and by him. *All the promises of God in him are yea, and amen*; that is, verified and fulfilled in him, and confirmed by him to us. Learn, 1. That God has made promises,

many promises to his people. 2. That all the promises which God has made to his people, are made in Christ, and ratified by him. Christ acts the part and office of a surety; he undertakes and engages for God, that all which he hath promised shall be made good to us. Learn, 3. That the promises made by God, and ratified and confirmed in Christ, do all tend to the glory of God. They show the sovereignty of his grace, in making promises to his creatures of mercy, who deserved nothing but flaming vengeance and implacable fury. They show the amplitude of his grace; for if grace did not flow abundantly from the heart of God towards us, we could never have received so large a stock of promises from him. Let us then glorify God, by setting a just value upon his promises, as the unchangeable assurance of his love and grace.

21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, *is* God; 22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

In these two verses we have four very great and noble privileges, which the apostle declares God had conferred upon the Corinthians: namely, his establishing, anointing, and sealing of them, and giving the earnest of his holy Spirit to them. First, their establishment: *He which stablisheth us with you is God.* Learn thence, That a people's establishment in the doctrine of the gospel, and in the faith of the promise, is alone the gracious work of God. We are naturally like reeds shaken with every wind: it is the establishing grace of God that makes us pillars in the church. Again, secondly, their anointing, this is from God; the sanctifying grace of God is often in scripture compared to oil, in regard of its effects. It refresheth the weary, it healeth the wounded, it comforts the heart, it beautifies the face, it strengthens the limbs. Such internal virtues and excellences hath the sanctifying grace of God in the hearts of the people. Thirdly, their sealing: *Who hath also sealed us.* God's sealing of his children doth imply his high valuation and esteem of them. What is sealed is esteemed very precious: it implies their safety and security; what is under seal, is not in danger of being lost. Again, sealing doth imply secrecy and privacy; that which is sealed is secret and hidden; it is the new name which none know but he that receiveth it. Finally, sealing is for confirmation; contracts and bargains among men are confirmed by

hand and seal. Thus the graces of the Spirit which sanctify us, do also witness and seal to us the assurance of God's love and special favour in Jesus Christ. The fourth privilege here conferred by God upon the Corinthians, is his *giving the earnest of his Spirit in their hearts*: grace wrought in the heart here is a sure earnest of glory hereafter; there is a great deal of difference between a shilling, a single piece of money, and a shilling that is an earnest of a greater sum. It is joy to find grace in the soul, as grace mortifying our corruptions; but it rejoices much more to look upon grace as an earnest of glory, as the first-fruits which insure the full crop.

23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you, I came not as yet unto Corinth.

In these words, our apostle doth assure the Corinthians in a very solemn manner, that it was not any inconstancy or carnal respect in himself that made him delay his coming to them, but it was purely to spare them, as being unwilling to come with his rod among them, and to use severity upon them. Here observe the apostle's manner of speech, it is by way of adjuration: *I call God to record upon my soul, &c.* The words are an assertory and execratory oath, wherein God is called to witness the truth of what he said. Learn hence, That it is lawful for Christians under the gospel to swear upon a necessary and great occasion. But what great occasion was here for St. Paul to do it? *Ans.* Very great; the false apostles did accuse him for a vain-glorious and inconstant man. This accusation did redound to the discredit of his ministry, the dishonour of the gospel, the destruction of the church; therefore he solemnly protests, that no inconstancy or worldly motives did cause him to delay his promise; but a wise and spiritual consideration of their good, a willingness to spare them, and an unwillingness to use severity upon them. Hence learn, That the ministerial power which God giveth the officers of the church, ought to be managed with much holy prudence and Christian commiseration: the end of their power should always be in their mind, which is edification, and not destruction.

24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

As if the apostle had said, "Though we have a ministerial power, yet we have not a magisterial dominion over you, to treat as we please the professors of the gospel, or to punish those that walk not according there-

unto." Learn hence, That though Christ has invested the officers of the church with a ministerial power, yet they have not thereby any dominion over the faith of believers; *Not that we have dominion over your faith*; he adds, *But are helpers of your joy*. He doth not say, We are helpers of your grace, helpers of your faith, helpers of your holiness, though this is necessarily implied; but helpers of your joy and comfort. Note thence, That a special part of the minister's work consists in administering to the comfort and consolation of such as stand in need of it, and are qualified for it. Our first work is to help the graces, our next to help the comforts, of our people. The Spirit of God is a sanctifier, and then a comforter: joy is not the first stone in God's building; grace and holiness are first, comfort and consolation next. *For by faith ye stand*; ye have stood and do stand, steadfast in the faith; that is, the generality and body of you; though some among you deny the resurrection, yet the best and greatest part of you are sound in the faith, and stedfast in the faith. Our apostle doth not unchurch them, because of some disorders among them, nor because of some heretical doctrines found with them, but endeavours to reform their disorders, that so when he came unto them he might not come with his rod, but in the spirit of meekness.

CHAP. II.

Our apostle having in the former chapter vindicated himself from the imputation of levity and inconstancy charged upon him by the false apostles, because he resolved to come to this church at Corinth, and promised so to do; but contrary to his intention was providentially obstructed in the performance of his promise: he comes in this chapter to vindicate himself from the aspersions of too much rigour and too great severity towards the incestuous person: assuring them, that it was no pleasure to him to make them sorrowful; and that no manner of severity should be exercised by him any farther than was absolutely needful, in order to the reforming of evil manners that were found amongst them: accordingly he thus bespeaks them, ver. 1.

BUT I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. 2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

The occasion of St. Paul's writing again to the Corinthians, and deferring for the present to come unto them, is here intimated. There was an incestuous person in the church of Corinth, who had married his father's wife; if she were his own natural mother, the sin was most prodigious and unnatural, that the child of her womb should be the husband of her bed; if she

were his mother-in-law, it was against the law of reverence, and an heinous sin for the son to uncover the father's nakedness. And it was an aggravation of the sin, that the person committing it was a Christian, a member, and, as some think, a minister of the church of Corinth. St. Paul, in his former epistle, chap. v. commands them to excommunicate this incestuous person, which accordingly they did; and this spiritual physic, applied to the offender, had a good effect upon him; for being punished by the church, he punisheth himself; and being cast out of the church, he casts away his sin. Happy is it, when the church's censures are so executed as to bring offenders to a sight and sense of their sins, in order to a deep humiliation and thorough reformation. Now, says the apostle, *I determined not to come to you in heaviness*; that is, one great reason why I put off my journey to you was this, that my coming amongst you might neither occasion sorrow, nor create heaviness, either to you or myself; for I delight not in censuring and chiding, when I can otherwise avoid it: *For if I make you sorry, and myself with you, who is it that can make me glad, but he that is made sorry by me?* that is, nothing can make me glad but the reformation of the fallen person. Where note, That nothing adds so much to the joy and comfort of the ministers of Christ, as their recovery of revolted souls from under the empire and dominion of sin and Satan. We joy with them, and rejoice in God for them; we live as we see any of you stand fast in the Lord, we die as we see others stick fast in their sins.

3 And I wrote this same unto you, lest when I come, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is *the joy of you* all.

As if the apostle had said, I gave you a sharp reproof in my former epistle, but it was in much love, and upon a good design; namely, to procure such a reformation of life and manners among you, as might prevent my sorrow when I came unto you; for as your grief is my grief, so my joy is the joy of you all. As the ministers of Christ and their beloved people are one, so their griefs are one, and their joys one; they rejoice together, and mourn together; their griefs and sorrows are mutual, and their joys and comforts are reciprocal.

4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should

be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

Here our compassionate apostle tells them, That what he had wrote in his former epistle with some severity and sharpness, concerning the incestuous person, was so far from being written with any intention to grieve them, that it was a real affliction to him, a very heavy pressure upon his heart, which fetched abundances of tears from his eyes, and consequently was an effect of the greatest love imaginable. Hence note, That when the ministers of Christ do execute church-censures, if they do not dispense them with tenderness and compassion, so as to let the offenders see that what is done is out of abundant love unto them, they will never be the better for them, nor be bettered or reclaimed by them. Doth a civil judge weep when he passes sentence upon a malefactor? much more should an ecclesiastical judge mourn, when he pronounceth the censures of the church upon notorious offenders. Behold the apostle here declaring with what anguish of spirit and grief of heart he wrote to have the sentence of excommunication executed and inflicted on the incestuous Corinthian: *Out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears.*

5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

As if the apostle had said, This incestuous person, who hath caused so much grief to me by his sin, has caused no little grief to you also, to the sounder part of you, even to all, but those who were partakers with him in his sin: he hath grieved me, but in part only; you, as well as myself, have been grieved by him, and afflicted for him. Not only the ministers, but members of the church, are affected with, and afflicted for, the scandal of professors' sins. St. Paul grieved but in part for the incestuous person's sin, the sounder part of the church mourned with him. Or, secondly, *He hath grieved me, but in part, that I may not overcharge you.* It is as much as if he had said, "The grief and sorrow which I have had for the sin and scandal of this notorious offender, I am far, very far, from charging upon the whole church; I dare not load you all with that imputation, as if you were involved in the guilt of it." 'Tis not only injurious, but very unjust, to cast the dirt of professors' sin upon the face of their profession, or to charge the guilt of a particular person's

miscarriages upon the whole church or Christian society to which he doth belong. As religion justifies no man's faults, so no man's faults should condemn religion.

6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which *was inflicted* of many.

Observe here, 1. The nature of that punishment which the holy apostle thought and adjudged, to be sufficient for the guilty person's sin; and that was excision, not destruction; excommunication, not death. The rejection of such a sinner from the communion of the church, by church-censure and discipline, was the punishment pronounced. Observe, 2. By whom, and before, this punishment of excommunication was executed and inflicted, namely, by the officers and governors of the church, (who had and have the power of the keys,) in the presence and with the consent of the whole church. In the primitive church, we have reason to believe, when any offender was to be excommunicated, the people were acquainted with the crime: the guilty person pleaded in their presence, they judged as your jurymen do of the matter of fact, they consented to the condemnation; but the sentence was not pronounced by them, but by the governors and officers of the church, before them and in their presence. And as the church or body of the people consented to the offenders' rejection, so likewise to his re-admission to the communion of the church; but their actual admission was by the pastor and governor of the church, and not by the people. Contrary to this primitive practice, is the modern practice of those who have snatched the keys out of the hands of the pastors, (where Christ placed them,) and put them into the hands of the people.

7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. 8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

Observe, 1. The great duty which the apostle directs the Corinthians to the performance of, towards this sorrowful offender: *to forgive him, to comfort him, to confirm him*; that is, to absolve him from the sentence and censure of the church; no longer to continue their aversion to him, but to restore him to the church's communion, to re-admit him to their fellowship

and society, to comfort him with the notices of God's pardoning mercy; and to confirm their love to him, by showing that their excommunicating of him was with design to reform, not to ruin him; to recover him by repentance, and not to drive him to despair. This is the importance of the three several words which are used here, *Forgive him, comfort him, confirm him*. From whence note, That in notorious crimes which give great cause of scandal to the church, the comfort of the offender depends not only upon his peace and reconciliation with God, but also upon the relaxation of the censures of the church, and his re-admission to the church's fellowship and communion: forgive him, and confirm your love towards him. Observe, 2. The reason offered by our apostle why this penitent offender should be forgiven and comforted, namely, *Lest he should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow*. Learn hence, 1. That sorrow even for sin itself may be excessive and overmuch. 2. That excessive and overmuch sorrow swalloweth up a person; it may swallow him up in the gulf of despair, and, as a consequent of it, in the gulf of death. As worldly sorrow causeth death, so may religious sorrow also, even sorrow for sin. We may dishonour God by an excessive mourning, even for God's dishonour. Sorrow is not of any worth in itself, but only as it serves to a spiritual end and purpose; and when it is excessive, not only the comforts, but the gifts and usefulness, of the person sorrowing, are in danger to be swallowed up by it. *Quest*. But when is sorrow for sin excessive and overmuch? *Ans*. When it obstructs the exercise of our graces, when it hinders the performance of our duties, when it hurts our health, and overwhelmeth nature, when it perverts reason, swalloweth up faith, hindereth our hope, prejudiceth our joy, and unfits us both for doing and suffering the will of God; in a word, that sorrow for sin which keeps the soul from looking towards the mercy-seat, that keeps Christ and the soul asunder, and renders a person unfit for the service of God and for the communion of saints, is a sinful sorrow.

9 For this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. 10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; 11 Lest Satan should get an advantage

of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle declares what was his in writing his former epistle to them, namely, this amongst others, to exercise their obedience, and to make trial what regard they would show to his apostolical authority; whether they would be as obedient to his directions in absolving of penitents, as they were before in inflicting church-censures upon bold offenders. *For this end did I write, that I might have a proof of you.* Observe, 2. The apostle declares his own forwardness to forgive penitent offenders himself, as well as makes known his desires that they should do it: *Whom ye forgive, I forgive also, in the person of Christ; that is, as you forgive him, so do I: and I absolve him by Christ's authority, as I excommunicated him in Christ's name, 1 Cor. v. 4. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* As he delivered the incestuous person to Satan in the name of Christ, so in the name and person of Christ he releases him, and relaxes the sentence against him. The power of excommunication and absolution, of binding and loosing, of casting out, and receiving into the church, is by Christ committed to church-governors, who are to execute this power *in the person of Christ*; that is, in the name and by the authority of Christ. Observe, 3. The arguments with which, and the motive by which, he presses the church at Corinth to forgive the incestuous person, and to re-admit him into their society: *lest Satan get an advantage of us.* What advantage? *Ans.* An advantage to lead them into sin thus, by their abusing that power which God had given them for edification, to the destruction of a person, by making them guilty of spiritual murder by their over rigorous proceeding against him, by driving him to despair, by tempting him to apostasy. Satan sometimes, by too great slackness of discipline, seeks to lull sinners asleep in the bosom of the church; and sometimes, by too great severity, endeavours to drive them to despair. The force of the apostle's words lies thus: I advise you to continue the severity of discipline no longer towards this penitent offender, but receive him again into your communion with all tenderness and speed, lest Satan should circumvent you, and overreach you, and make use of your rigour to your own ruin, by rendering your doctrine hateful, and your discipline detestable: *for we are not ignorant of his devices, his contrivances, plots, and stratagems laid against us.* Learn hence, 1. That Satan is a master in the art of deceiving

souls: he is full, very full, of cunning methods and devices to circumvent persons, and catch them in the net of his deceits. Learn, 2. That it concerns all persons, but especially the ministers of the gospel, to be well acquainted with, and not ignorant of, any devices or plots of Satan. Satan has a multitude of devices, by which he undoes, entangles, and deceives souls; and no Christian ought to be ignorant of them, lest he be circumvented and undone by them. Many are his devices for drawing us into sin, for drawing us off from duty, for drawing us into temptation, for drowning us in despair: our wisdom will be not to dispute, but to resist; for by resisting, our temptations will be fewer, and our strength greater, James iv. 7. *Resist the devil, and he will fly.* Where note, That the promise of conquest is made to resisting, not disputing with Satan: to parley with him, is the way to be overcome by him.

12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord. 13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but, taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia. 14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

Observe here, 1. The unwearied diligence of this great apostle in travelling from place to place, and carrying the gospel with him from one city and nation to another: *I came to Troas, and from thence to Macedonia.* Observe, 2. The success which the holy apostle had in preaching the gospel with unwearied diligence in those places: *A door was opened unto him of the Lord.* This either signifies, 1. The free liberty which he had to preach the gospel in those places; the door of his mouth was not shut by persecutors, the enemies and opposers of the free gospel, but the word of the Lord had a free course in the labours of its ministers. Or, 2. This opened door may signify and import the great and gracious success which God gave the apostle in his work; as God by his providence opened the apostle's mouth, to preach and publish the glad tidings of the gospel, so by his holy Spirit he opened the people's hearts to receive and entertain the glad tidings of salvation which the gospel brought. Acts xvi. 14. *The Lord opened Lydia's heart, that she attended to the words which were spoken of Paul.* Observe, 3. How

careful the apostle is to ascribe the entire praise, and to return the whole thanks, to Almighty God, for all the gracious assistance and success which he had received in his ministerial service: *Thanks be to God, which causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.* As if the apostle had said, "Blessed be God, although our enemies have been many, and our difficulties great, yet God has given me, and my fellow-apostles, such resolution of mind, that we have not only encountered with them, but triumphed over them, in a powerful conversion of so many from heathenism to Christianity; and has enabled us to spread the sweet odour of the gospel far and near, by our laborious preaching of it from place to place." Then is the word, and God in the word, glorified, when the sword of the Spirit is taken into the hand of the Spirit; when he girds this sword upon his thigh, as most mighty, and rides on triumphantly, conquering and to conquer, in the hearts of his people, till he has consummated his victories in a glorious triumph over all the powers of hell and darkness: *Thanks be to God that causeth us to triumph in Christ.*

15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16 To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.—

Observe here, 1. The title given to the gospel, and to the preachers and dispensers of it; they are a *savour*, an allusion, probably, to the ointment of sweet perfume, which the high-priests under the law were anointed with. The breath of the gospel is a sweet odour or smell, and God's faithful ministers are they that carry it, and blow it abroad to perfume sinners that lie stinking in their sins. Observe, 2. The contrary effects which the preaching of the gospel has upon those that sit under it; it is the savour of life unto some, of death unto others. Here it was so: the apostle's ministry was a savour of life to the believing Gentiles, of death to the unbelieving Jews; all men are to be reckoned in a state of life or death, of perishing or being saved, according as they do or do not receive the savour, and relish the doctrine, of the gospel. But how comes the preaching of the gospel to be the savour of death unto some? *Ans.* Partly through pride, in not enduring to be reproved by the gospel; partly through prejudice against the ministers of the gospel; partly through slothfulness, neglecting to come under the sound of the gospel; and partly through cursed

infidelity, in not believing the message which the gospel brings. Thus is the gospel, which was ordained for life, the savour of death unto death. Observe, 3. The sweet support which God gives his faithful ministers in the discharge of their duty, though their doctrine fails of desired success; they are a *sweet savour unto God, as well in them that perish, as in them that are saved.* Lord! how would thy ministers be of all men miserable, shouldst thou require the success of their labours at their hands; shouldst thou say, "Either reconcile my people unto me, or I will never be reconciled unto you?" but we shall be rewarded by thee according to our faithfulness, not according to our people's fruitfulness. The faithful ministers of Christ are a sweet-smelling savour in the nostrils of God, as well in them that perish as in them that are saved. Though Israel (their people) be not gathered, yet shall they be glorious: God will reward them, *secundum laborem, non fructum*; the nurse shall be paid for her care and pains, though the child dies at the breast.

—And who is sufficient for these things?

As if the apostle had said, "So great and weighty is the work of preaching the everlasting gospel to a lost world, that neither myself, nor any of my fellow-apostles, are sufficient for it of ourselves. *Who is sufficient?* That is, none are sufficient, without proportionable strength and help from God, neither man nor angel; to preach the gospel, as it ought, is a mighty work, a weighty work. If any thing otherwise, it is either their ignorance or inadvertency that makes them think so. What! is it an easy matter to search into the deep things of God, the great mysteries of the gospel, which have an unfathomable depth! Is it easy to instruct the ignorant, to convince the obstinate, to resolve the doubting, to reduce the wandering, to know the state of our flock, to visit the sick as we ought, to speak to them, and pray for them, as persons upon the confines of eternity! What! is all this, and much more, a trivial work, and common performance! No, verily, as there is no service more honourable than that of the ministry, so there is none more arduous and laborious; and therefore the greatest men that ever God employed in and about this work, have been ready to sink under the apprehension of the insuperable difficulties that do attend it. If we consider how a gospel minister ought to excel in knowledge, in utterance, in prudence and conduct, in exemplary piety, in patient contending with a people's froward-

ness and perverseness, we need not wonder at our apostle's exclamation or expository question in the words before us: *Who is sufficient for these things?*

17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.

Observe here, 1. The character which the apostle gives the false apostles who were crept in amongst the Corinthians: they were *corrupters of the word of God*; they did sophisticate and adulterate the sincere word of God, by intermixing their own pride and passions, their own inventions and imaginations, with the doctrine which they delivered. False teachers deal with the word, as some vintners deal with their wines; they imbase them in their nature, that they may advance them in their price, and thereby increase their own profit; they deliver the word of God in subtilty, but not in sincerity. Observe, 2. The declaration which the apostle makes of his own uprightness and integrity in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ: *As of sincerity, as of God, and in the sight of God speak we in Christ*; that is, we act as men of sincerity in what we do, as men taught of God and sent by God, as men acted by the power and guided by the Spirit of Christ, and all this is in the sight of God; we speak as from God, of God, in obedience to his command, and with an eye at his glory. He is a better preacher that speaks with an upright heart, than he that speaks with an eloquent tongue; he that acts from religious principles, for holy ends, as in the presence of the all-seeing God, and with a fixed eye at the glory of God in what he preaches, he is an interpreter one of a thousand.

CHAP. III.

Our apostle in this chapter intimates to us how much the reputation of a minister's person is needful and necessary in order to the success of his ministry; and because the false apostles did seek by all artifices to lessen St. Paul's esteem among the Corinthians, he showed that their conversion to Christianity was a full evidence of God's owning and approving of him as his ambassador, and a sufficient commendation of his person and ministry amongst them; which ministry he proves to be far more excellent than that of Moses, as the gospel of life and liberty is more glorious than the law of condemnation.

DO we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? 2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all

men. 3 *Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God: not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.*

Our apostle here expostulates the case with the Corinthians, why they should at any time hearken to the false apostles, who, by reflecting upon his person and ministry, made it needful for him to vindicate both from contempt and scorn. As if he had said, "What! do I need to begin again in this second epistle, as I did in the first, to commend myself, and the effects of my ministry, among you? Or need I commendatory letters either to you or from you, as the false teachers amongst you have? No, verily, you yourselves, by your conversion to Christianity, and embracing the faith of the gospel, are a better attestation and testimonial to the world, of the success of my ministry, than any written epistle is or can be: for you are *an epistle written in my heart*; that is, your conversion by my ministry is the joy and rejoicing of my heart; there it is that I continually carry a thankful and honourable remembrance of you, and bear you upon my heart, whenever I go in and out before the Lord. And as my epistle, *you are known and read of all men*; that is, all Christians, far and near, take notice of you as a church which God has eminently blessed my ministry to the conversion and edification of." But lest the apostle should seem too assuming in calling the Corinthians his epistle, in the next words he calls them the epistle of Christ, verse 3, *Ye are the epistle of Christ, ministered by us*; that is, your faith and conversion was the work of Christ's Spirit, though wrought by my ministry; he having wrote his law in your hearts after a more excellent manner than any thing that can be written with ink and paper; not as the ten commandments of old were written, *in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart*; that is, in your hearts made soft and pliable and ready to obey the word and will of God, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, using my ministry as the pen or instrument in his hand in order thereunto. Learn hence, 1. That it is a very great favour from God when his ministers can see the success of their labours in the hearts and lives of any of their people; when they can say, *Ye are our epistle*. Learn, 2. That nothing doth so highly commend our ministry as our people's proficiency: their improvement in knowledge, their steadfastness in the faith, their growth in grace and holiness, is be-

yond all verbal commendations and acknowledgments whatsoever. Sermons fetch not applause from men's renown; the people's practice is the preacher's crown. Learn, 3. That whatever success the faithful ministers of Christ meet with either in the work of conversion or edification, among a people, they attribute the whole efficiency of it unto God, ascribing nothing more than a bare instrumentality to themselves: *Ye are the epistle of Christ*, says the apostle, *ministered by us*; Christ has written his law in your hearts by my ministry: as if he had said, "Christ is the writer, the pen is the minister, the ink the Spirit, the paper, or table that receives the impression, is the heart, and the law of God, the writing writ therein and thereupon."

4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward :

Observe here, How the apostle encourages himself, from the experience he had of the present success of his ministry, to hope for the favour of farther and future success: *Such trust* or confidence have we, through the grace of Christ, of the constant efficacy of our ministry, that he will still own and honour it, succeed and bless it. When God has rendered our labours acceptable and successful amongst a people, either for conversion or edification, it should encourage us to trust in God for the efficacious assistance of our ministry, and render us yet more successful amongst them, and a greater blessing to them.

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; 6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament: not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle having made an apology and defence for himself and his ministry, against those that did calumniate him, in the former verses; in the verse before us he acknowledges his great inability for this work, and that his whole sufficiency of service was from God; and this without doubt he mentions not only out of humility, but out of prudence also, in order to stop the mouths of those who might be apt to think he had too high an esteem of himself. As if the apostle had said, "Far be it from me to think that I could procure the success of my ministry, that I have any such sufficiency of myself to convert souls; no, no,

my sufficiency and success is all from God; for, alas! there is no proportion between such a sublime and supernatural service as that of the gospel ministry is, and the impotency and weakness of man." *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.* Observe, 2. The free and full acknowledgment which the apostle makes of the great things which God had done for him, and by him: he did not find, but made him a minister, an able minister; yea, an able minister of the New Testament, or new covenant; not a preacher of the law of Moses, but of the gospel of Jesus: *Who hath made us able ministers of the new testament.* To be a sufficient and successful gospel minister, is a very great favour from God to any person: the clay of the gospel is better than the gold of the temple; the rags of the evangelical, more rich than the robes of the Levitical preacher: it is a greater honour to be, and a greater favour to hear, the meanest gospel preacher than to hear all Moses's lectures. Observe, 3. How our apostle here insensibly slides into a comparison which he makes between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ, in which he magnifies and prefers the latter above the former; the law he calls *the letter*, the gospel *the spirit*; that is, a ministration of the Spirit. *The letter killeth*—that is, the law condemneth and curseth the sinner, the transgressor of it; but the Spirit of Christ revealed in the gospel enableth, as well as directeth, to obey, and so giveth life. Note here, How false the Quakers' and others' gloes is upon these words: they by *the letter* will understand the whole written word of God contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the law and gospel both; and by *the spirit*, will have to be meant the inward and immediate teachings of the light within them. Others, by *the letter*, understand the literal and historical sense of scripture in general; and by *the spirit* giving life, they understand the mystical and spiritual sense of scripture; but it is evident from ver. 3, that by *the letter* he understands the law engraven in stone, the law as delivered by Moses with an appearance of the glory of the Lord upon mount Sinai; and by *the spirit* is meant the blessed Spirit of Christ given to the apostles to enable them to preach the gospel, and conferred upon all believers that did obediently hear and receive it.

7 But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face

of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away; 8 How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?

Our apostle in this and the following verses, goes on with his comparison betwixt the law and the gospel, and shows the transcendency of the latter above the former. Where note, 1. He calls the law again a killing law, or a ministration of death; because it condemns men for the breach of it to temporal and eternal death, without opening to them any door of hope. Note, 2. This law (he speaks of it by way of diminution) was only written upon and engraven in stone; whereas the gospel is written in the fleshly tables of men's hearts. Note, 3. How the apostle declares that this ministration of the law was *glorious*; glorious in the minister of it, Moses, who had such a lustre upon his face, that the children of Israel could not bear the sight of it: and *glorious* in the manner of giving it; there was a great deal of the glory and majesty of God attended the giving of the law to Moses; the ministration of the law was glorious. Note 4. The comparison which the apostle makes between the law and the gospel, and the preference which he gives to the one above the other. 1. As the glory of Moses's face ceased after a while, so the glory of the law ceased at the coming of the gospel. 2. The law was delivered by angels to Moses, but the gospel was delivered to the apostles by the Son of God, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. 3. Whereas the glory of Moses did more and more decrease; the glory put upon the apostles, and derived from Christ, was still more and more increasing upon them. But, 4. The chief glory of the gospel which the apostle here insists upon, is *the ministration of the Spirit*, in the large effusions of it under the gospel dispensation, giving spiritual and eternal life to believers, instead of death spiritual and eternal coming by the law. Well therefore might our apostle here say, the ministration of the Spirit, or the gospel, is much more glorious; and consequently a greater reverence and honour is due to it, and to the ministers of it.

9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. 11 For if

that which was done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

Observe here, 1. The different titles given to the law, and to the gospel; the former is called *the ministration of condemnation*, because it condemns men eternally for the violation of it; the latter is called *the ministration of righteousness* or justification, because it discovers to us the only way for a sinner's justification before God; namely, by the righteousness of the Mediator. Observe, 2. That the apostle, comparing the law and the gospel together, acknowledges that there was a surpassing glory in the latter above and beyond the former. Indeed, God's institution stamp't an excellency upon the Jewish worship, and the law given them had both an intrinsic glory in it, as it was a revelation of the will of God; and also an accidental and adventitious glory, as it was attended with the solemnity of thunder and lightning, fire and smoke, and a voice like the sound of a trumpet, at the promulgation of it: yet, says the apostle, compared with the gospel, the glory of the law, or Jewish worship, had no glory in it at all, by reason of the glory that doth excel; as the moon compared with the sun, is so outshined by it, that its brightness is little taken notice of. True, indeed, the law was a revelation of God's will, as well as the gospel; but with this happy advantage on the gospel's side. The law was a revelation of God's will, as to duty and as to condemnation, in case of non-performance of that duty; but the gospel is a revelation of God's will, as to grace and mercy, as to remission of sin and eternal life. Observe, 3. Another argument produced here by the apostle to prove the ministration of the gospel to be much more glorious than that of the law; namely, because it is much more durable and abiding, ver. 11. *If that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.* The force of the argument lies thus: That which is durable and permanent, is far more excellent than that which is temporary and transient. Now the law, or Jewish dispensation is vanished; its ministration is ceased, and all the legal ordinances are abolished; but the gospel-state remaineth to the end of the world. It is called a kingdom that cannot be moved, Heb. xii. 28. therefore the gospel-ministration, which is eternal, fixed, and abiding, must needs be more excellent and more glorious than the legal dispensation, which was temporary, transient, and vanishing.

12 Seeing then that we have such

hope, we use great plainness of speech: 13 And not as Moses, *which* put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: 14 But their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil unstaken away in the reading of the Old Testament: which *veil* is done away in Christ. 15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. 16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

Here the apostle draws an inference from the foregoing discourse; that seeing himself and the other apostles had such hope, that their ministry was thus glorious, such confidence and assurance of the perfection and perpetuity of their ministry, they did use great plainness, freedom, and boldness of speech, in preaching and publishing the gospel; and did not imitate Moses, the minister of the law, who put a veil over his face; which was a sign of the obscurity of the legal dispensation, and of the blindness of the Jews, who could not see the end and accomplishment of that ceremonial and typical administration, which was to be abolished by Christ and his gospel: but their minds were then, and still are, blinded by prejudice and unbelief, and the same veil remaineth to this day spread over Moses's writings, and not taken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is now done away by the doctrine of Christ contained in the New Testament: nevertheless, when the hearts of the Jews shall be turned unto the Lord, and they own and acknowledge Jesus Christ, then the veil shall be taken away from the Jews, and they shall then clearly understand and see what is now concealed and hidden from their eyes. Learn hence, 1. That there is a natural veil of blindness and ignorance upon the minds of men, which hinders their discerning and understanding gospel mysteries. Learn, 2. That there is upon the understandings of the Jews a veil of unbelief and rooted prejudice against Christ and his holy religion; they wilfully shut their eyes, and said, "they would not see," and God has judiciously closed their eyes, and said, "they shall not see." Learn, 3. That by reason of this veil upon their hearts, they cannot look to the end of that which was abolished; that is, to Jesus Christ, who was the end and scope at which the whole ceremonial law did aim and tend. Learn, 4. That

when the Jews shall be called home, and converted to Christianity, the veil shall be removed from their hearts, and they shall then understand the tendency and meaning of the whole ceremonial law, and observe its fulfilling and accomplishment in our Lord Jesus Christ: *When they shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.*

17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

As if he had said, Christ is that quickening and life-giving Spirit who takes away the veil from off our hearts; and where that Spirit, that all-glorious and all-powerful Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; that is, clearness, and no more veil; freedom from the yoke of the legal administration, a liberty and freedom from sin, a liberty unto righteousness, a freedom and readiness of spirit to do good, a liberty of address and approach to God, a liberty of speech in prayer before God. Thus the Spirit of the Lord is a free spirit.

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

That is, we who live under the light, and enjoy the liberty of the gospel, with open face beholding as in a clear glass the glory of the Lord Jesus, as Moses did the glory of God in the mount, are by degrees changed into the same image with him, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord working in us, and transforming us into his own likeness. Learn hence, 1. That the word and ordinances of God are the glass, wherein we have now a sight of the glory of God. Learn, 2. That the sight of God in his ordinances is transforming, as well as the sight of him in heaven; the glory into which we are changed, is our conformity to that holiness which shineth in the word. Vision, or the sight of God here in his ordinances, assimilates as well as in heaven; perfect vision produceth perfect assimilation; but the soul's present assimilation, or imperfect conformity to God here, is gradually carried on by daily communion with him. All sorts of communion among men have an assimilating power and efficacy; he that converses with vain company, grows more vain; and he that delights in holy and spiritual company, grows more serious than he was before. But nothing so transforms the spirit of a man, as communion with God in his ordinances doth;

none so like him, as those that converse most frequently with him. Learn, 3. That if the sight of God in the glass of an ordinance be so assimilating, how transforming will be the sight of God in heaven, when we shall there behold and see him face to face! If the vision of Christ here be so influential upon believers, what an illustrious and infallible efficacy will the immediate, clear, and perfect sight of his glory have in heaven; 1 John iii. 2. We shall be perfectly like him, when once we shall see him as he is.

CHAP. IV.

This chapter, together with a considerable part of this epistle, is apologetical or excusatory; in which the apostle vindicates his office and dignity from the prejudices which either his sufferings which attended him in the dispensation thereof, or the suggestions of false apostles, and deceitful workers, might have raised up against him. With these men he puts himself in the balance, and without either vanity or vain-glory prefers himself before them in point of fidelity and sincerity in the work of the ministry; as also in point of diligence in the service whereunto he was in special mercy called. And accordingly thus he speaks:

THEREFORE, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; 2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

That is, seeing we have such a glorious ministry far more excelling than that of Moses, mentioned in the conclusion of the foregoing chapter, as we have received mercy or special favours from God in committing it to us, so we faint not under the difficulties and pressures to which it doth expose us. *Having received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty;* (all fornication and uncleanness, all ambition and covetousness, which the false apostles allowed themselves in;) *not walking in guile or craftiness; nor handling the word of God deceitfully, as they do; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience, as persons acting in the sight of God.* Learn hence, 1. That the ministry of the gospel is a very glorious ministry, far excelling the Mosaic dispensation. 2. That it is a special favour from God to be judged faithful, and put into this ministry. 3. That no troubles, or trials, no difficulties, dangers, or distresses, should cause any of the faithful servants of God to faint, who have received mercy or favour from God to be put into the min-

istry: *Seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.* Observe next, How the apostle, having vindicated and extolled his ministry, does in the second verse declare and assert his fidelity in the discharge of his ministry: *Not handling the word of God deceitfully, but commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* Hence learn, That the apostles delivered the gospel, in all things necessary to be known, believed, and practised, with great plainness and sufficient perspicuity; otherwise they could not be said to manifest the truth to every man's conscience.

3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

As if he had said, We preach the gospel plainly; but if men do not understand and believe it, will not embrace and obey it, it is not an argument of the gospel's obscurity, but of our hearers' incredulity. The gospel is not hid from men for want of clearness, but only by means of their own voluntary and wilful blindness: *If our gospel be hid.* Here note, 1. St. Paul's claim and interest in the gospel which he preached, he calls it *his* gospel: not as if he was the author of it, but because of his instrumentality in the promulgation and establishing of it; it was a divine treasure committed to his care and trust: it was not his gospel by way of original revelation, but by way of ministerial dispensation. Note, 2. The Corinthians' non-proficiency under the gospel specified, or at least supposed. *If our gospel be hid:* that is, if the word which we preach with the greatest plainness, in the greatest simplicity and sincerity; if it be hidden from the minds and understandings of men, so as to miss of its convincing power and converting efficacy, the fault is not in the gospel, but in them that sit under it. Note, 3. The heavy doom and judgment which the apostle passes upon all such persons as sit under the external dispensation of the gospel, and yet are no ways enlightened nor improved by it, but remain blind and ignorant, obstinate and unreformed. It is a sad symptom and foreboding sign of a lost people. Learn hence, 1. That there are many, very many, who sit under the external dispensation of the gospel, unto whom the gospel is an hidden gospel. Learn, 2. That the gospel's being hid from a people who have long enjoyed the light and benefit of it, is a sad symptom, yea, a certain sign, of a lost people. Such blindness, under the clearest light, is like the covering of the face, or tying the handkerchief over the eyes, in order to the turning off the obstinate sinner into eternal hell.

4 In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Observe here, 1. The title given to Satan: he is styled *the god of this world*; not properly, but because the honour and homage of a god is challenged by him, and by a multitude of sinners given to him. He is called by our Saviour, *the prince of this world*; and by the apostle *the ruler of the darkness of this world*; because he ruleth over a great part of the world, and they are his subjects, or rather his slaves. Observe, 2. The way and course which Satan takes to secure his subjects' obedience to himself: *he blinds their eyes*: that they may never know a better prince, see a better way, or understand a better state, than he hath drawn them into. Satan blinds the understandings of men by the efficacy of divers lusts, which are bred and nourished in their hearts. Now the streamings of sensual lusts from a corrupt heart do blind the understanding, and beset the judgment; that the sinner can neither see nor know the excellency of spiritual objects. O bloody and barbarous prince, that puts out the eyes of all his subjects, darkens the mind and understanding, takes away the thinking, considering, and reasoning power of the soul, that they neither see nor consider spiritual things, nor have any distinct and effectual apprehensions of them! Observe, 3. The character of the persons whom Satan, the god of this world, hath blinded: *Such as believe not*: that is, both such as want the means of faith, and such as enjoy the means, but want the grace of faith; the former is the case of the pagan, the latter of the Christian world. Lord! how many live under the light of the gospel, that never had heart to receive it, or will to obey it! How great a part of the Christianized world do reject Christ; though called by his name, yet will not own his authority, or submit to his government! The nobles of the world think themselves dishonoured by submitting their necks to Christ's yoke; the sensualists of the world will not lay down a lust for him, that laid down his life for them; the worldlings of the earth prefer their dirt and dunghill before the pearl of great price. O, how few amongst them that profess Christianity, do love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity! Observe, 4. The great end and design of the devil's agency, in blinding the minds of men with ignorance and error, with passion and pre-

judice; *Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into their hearts*, to the ruin of him and his kingdom. As the sun casts its beams upon blind men, but they receive not the light of it; so, though the light of Christ's glorious gospel shines before the eyes of them whom the god of this world has blinded with the hopes and desires, with the possessions and enjoyments, of this world, yet they receive it not. Observe, 5. The glorious title here given to Christ. *The image of God*; that is, 1. His substantial and essential image, being God of God, very God of very God. Christ, considered with respect to his divine nature, is the express image of his Father's person. 2. Christ is his image as Mediator, and with reference to the gospel, in which he has given us glorious demonstrations of the power and wisdom, of the grace and holiness, of the mercy and goodness, of God towards us; all which, as in a glass, are represented to us, and presented before us. In both these respects Christ is called *The image of God*.

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

In these words our apostle further manifests his fidelity and integrity in preaching the gospel, by showing that he sought to advance Christ, and not himself, in preaching of it. Here note, 1. The duty practised by St. Paul: *We preach*. How mean and ignoble soever this office of preaching is esteemed by some men, who value not their own nor other men's souls, and therefore no wonder that they undervalue the means of making them happy; yet will the faithful ministers of Christ magnify this part of their office, not by pomp and state, not by scorn and superciliousness, as thinking it beneath them to preach, but by an humble and painful attendance upon the ministry which they have received of the Lord; and will dispense the word with evidence and perspicuity, with faithfulness and sincerity, with power and authority, with courage and boldness, and with exemplariness of conversation; not preaching angelical sermons, and leading diabolical lives. Observe, 2. The subject-matter of the apostle's preaching: *Not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord*. But when may persons be said to preach themselves? *Ans.* When they make themselves the authors of their own ministry, running before they are sent, and are self-created preachers: when they make themselves the matter of their preaching, venting their own passions, and prejudices and private opinions instead of the doctrine of Christ;

and when they make themselves the end of their preaching, aiming rather at pleasing others, and profiting themselves, than at the glory of God, and the good of men's souls. But what is it to preach Christ? *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.* Ans. When he is the author of our ministry, and we receive our mission from him; when we make him the object of our preaching; when the subject-matter and substance of it is Jesus Christ, either explicitly or reductively; and when we make him the end of our preaching, designing to promote the honour and interest of Christ by our ministry, that his people may be gathered, his body edified, his saints perfected, his enemies subdued, his gospel propagated, and he finally admired in all them that believe. Observe, 3. In what capacity the apostles looked upon himself in the church of Christ; not as a lord, but as a servant: *Ourselves your servants.* There is an honour belonging to Christ's ministers; but verily that honour consists in service which we owe to the church of Christ: servants we are to the souls of men, but not to the humours of men; at the same time that we are servants to them, we are to rule over them, and they are to obey, and submit unto us as those who watch for their souls. Therefore it is added, *servants for Jesus' sake*; that is, servants in order to the promoting of his honour, and his church's interest: *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Observe here, The faithful and humble acknowledgment which the apostle makes, how himself and his fellow-apostles came to preach Jesus Christ so convincingly to others; namely, That Almighty God, who at first, by his omnipotent word, produced light out of darkness, by no less efficacy and power brought him, a lost sinner, out of the darkness of pharisaism and sin, and shined into his and their hearts with a glorious light, to the intent that he and they should communicate and impart this divine light of the knowledge of God, which shineth in the face of Christ, unto others. Learn hence, That ministers must know Christ themselves, before they can make him known to others: Christ must be revealed in them, before he can be revealed by them; he must shine into their hearts by his Holy Spirit, and give them an experimental acquaintance, in their own

souls, with what they deliver and make known to others. Every truth ought to be the transcript of our own experience, and be preached first to our hearts, and then to our hearers. Who can savingly enlighten others, that is in the darkness of ignorance or sin himself?

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

In the foregoing verses we find the apostle magnifying his office, extolling his ministry, and vindicating his fidelity in the discharge of his duty. In this verse observe, 1. He compares the gospel he preached to a treasure: *We have this treasure*; a treasure for the enriching and edifying of the church. The gospel is a treasure, for its worth and dignity, for its abundance and variety, for its closeness and secrecy. This treasure Christ keeps under lock and key, only intrusting those with it whom he calls to it, and furnishes for it. They are no better than thieves and sacrilegious robbers, who, without a mediate call or warrant from Christ, do assume this trust, and break open this treasure. Observe, 2. The repository in which this treasure is laid up, *in earthen vessels*; so the apostles and ministers of the gospel are called. Where note, The word of description, they are *vessels*; and the word of diminution, they are *earthen vessels*. 1. The preachers of the gospel are represented by a word of description; they are *vessels*: thus vessels are not natural, but artificial instruments. No man is born a Christian, much less a minister, but made such. Vessels are not of equal capacity; some are less, others greater: thus the ministers of the gospel have gifts and graces of different degrees and excellences. Again, vessels are not for reception only, but for effusion also; as they receive and retain, so they let out what is put into them. The ministers of Christ are not only to receive and lay up, but to lay out this heavenly treasure, which is not impaired by imparting. Finally, Vessels are not the originals of what they have; but all they contain is poured into them, and received by them. A mine has treasure in its own bowels; but it is put into the chest. Thus the preachers of the gospel are not the authors, but the receivers only, of those truths that they publish: 1 Cor. xi. 23. *I have received of the Lord what I also delivered unto you.* Note farther, the word of diminution; they are *earthen vessels*. The preachers of the gospel are divine in regard of the sublimity of their doctrine, but human and earthen in regard of the frailty

of their condition. Their being called earthen vessels, may denote the meanness of their condition, which for the most part is little and low in the world: as the poor receive the gospel, so are they very often poor and low that publish the gospel, necessitous and indigent, *earthen vessels*. Again, it may denote the frailty of their persons, and the contemptibleness of them. Earthen vessels are little set by, stand in open places, used by every hand, and at every turn; while plate, gold and silver vessels, are laid and locked up with great carefulness. Thus it is often with the preachers of the gospel; they are objects base and vile, contemptible and despised, in the eyes of the world, vessels wherein there is no pleasure; yea, with some, not only our persons are despicable, but our very office and function is contemptible. In a word, as our mean condition and base estimation, so our bodily constitution proclaims us earthen: our bodies are earthen, because formed of the dust of the earth, because subject to flaws and cracks, and to be broken in pieces; we that preach eternal life to others, are dying men ourselves; and whilst the word of life is in our mouths, many times death is in our faces. Observe lastly, The reason assigned why this treasure of the gospel is committed to earthen vessels, men; not to heavenly vessels, angels; namely, *That the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us*: from the weakness of man the instrument, there redounds great honour to God the agent. This precious treasure of the gospel is lodged in such weak and worthless vessels, that as the power is from God, namely, the awakening, convincing, quickening, heart-changing power of the word, is from him; so the glory, the entire glory, and complete praise, may be attributed and ascribed to him: *We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us*.

8 *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed: we are perplexed, but not in despair;* 9 *Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed,* 10 *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.* 11 *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.* 12 *So then death worketh in us, but life in you.*

13 *We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;*

The false apostles and some weak Christians having taken offence at the manifold and great sufferings which St. Paul, with his fellow-apostles, had met with in the course of their ministry: in these verses St. Paul shows the church at Corinth, that there was no reason at all why any should be offended at his sufferings, or any cause why the false apostles should object, that if he had preached the gospel sincerely, Almighty God would never have suffered him to be persecuted and afflicted so severely; namely, because all his afflictions were so graciously moderated, and himself so powerfully upheld by God, that he sunk not under the weight and burthen of them. We are troubled, says he, on every side, but not overwhelmed with our troubles; we are often perplexed, but not so as to despair of God's help and succour; we are persecuted by men, but not forsaken of God; cast down indeed, but not killed by the fall. So that there is in our sufferings a resemblance and representation of the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ. We bear in our bodies a memorative conformity to our dying Lord, that it may appear how mightily we are supported by the quickening power of the Spirit of Christ, under all our afflictions. As if the apostle had said, "Behold and admire in us the almighty power of Christ exerted towards us in upholding these earthen vessels, (our frail bodies,) notwithstanding the many thousand knocks they have met with in carrying about that heavenly treasure, the holy gospel with which God has intrusted us." Observe next, *He rejoices in the cause of his sufferings: We are delivered unto death for Jesus' sake*; for our owning, preaching, and practising the doctrine of Jesus. Blessed be God, we suffer not as evil-doers, but for well-doing; we suffer for the sake of the best person, and in the best cause, that ever the world was acquainted with. He adds, *We are delivered unto death, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh*; that is, the infinitely wise God suffers us to be thus afflicted, that in and by the sufferings which our mortal flesh does sustain and undergo, he might make it evidently manifest that Christ is risen from the dead, and, as a living head, conveys the necessary influences of strength, support, and comfort, as to all members, so more particularly to his ministers; by which we are enabled, without fainting, to suffer the hardest things with patience,

courage, and constancy. Observe, lastly, He declares to them the great advantages which they reaped by his afflictions: *Death worketh in us, but life in you*; that is, the preaching of the gospel exposes us to death; but unto you it brings eternal life. Our death is your life, our sufferings are your advantage; we having the same faithful Spirit which was in the saints under the Old Testament, and particularly in holy David, *Psal. cxvi. 10*, who says, *I believed, and therefore speak; I was sore afflicted*. Now as he believed and trusted in God for deliverance out of his many and great troubles, so in like manner do we believe and trust. From the whole note, 1. That a perplexed and persecuted, an afflicted and distressed condition was the lot and portion of the members, but especially of the ministers of Christ, in the first and purest ages of the church. Christ espoused his church to himself upon the bed of his cross, his head begirt with a pillow of thorns, his body drenched in a bath of his own blood: and if the head was crowned with thorns, it is unsuitable that the feet should tread on roses. Note, 2. Though all Christ's followers have drunk of the same cup with himself, yet the dregs of the cup have usually been put into the hand of the ministers of the word: *We that live are always delivered unto death*. Most of the apostles were, by the rage of tyrants, put to cruel deaths, and offered up a bloody sacrifice. The calling of ministers is honourable, but their outward condition is deplorable: their embassy is glorious, but their usage is often grievous: God sends them forth with renown, the world entertains them with reproach. Note, 3. God doth not bring his people into a suffering condition, and there leave them; when they suffer for him, they are not forsaken by him. The voice of despair is not heard in the dark night of their calamity; but God has either the castle of providence, or the ark of promise; the all-sufficiency of his power, or the abundance of his grace: these, every of these, and all these, are for his people's retirement in the greatest storms and tempests: *We are troubled, yet not distressed; persecuted, but not forsaken*.

14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. 15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God.

A double reason is here assigned why the apostle bare his sufferings with such

invincible courage and Christian patience. The first is drawn from the advantage which would redound to the church by his sufferings: *All things are for your sakes*: that is, all the straits we are put to, turn to your advantage; if we die, it is to confirm you by our sufferings; if we be delivered, it is for God's glory, and your good, *that the abundant grace might, by the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God*. Whatever we meet with tends to the confirming of your faith, and the increasing of your thankfulness. A second reason is drawn from the joyful issue of his sufferings: he and his fellow-apostles steadfastly believed, that Almighty God, who raised up Christ from the dead, would in like manner raise them from the grave of their sufferings, yea, from the grave of death; and both soul and body shall be presented with them to be eternally glorified together. Learn hence, That how different soever the lot and portion of God's children and servants be in this life, some more, others less afflicted; yet having all, at the same time, faith in God for a joyful deliverance out of their afflictions, they shall all meet in the morning of the resurrection, and be by Christ presented unto God as persons redeemed by him, and shall eternally be glorified with him: *He which raised up Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you*.

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

The original word for *fainting* signifies to shrink back, as cowards in war, or to sink down as a porter under the pressure of some heavy burden: *For this cause we faint not*. For what cause? namely, this, that though their bodies were weakened by affliction, and they were daily decaying, as to the strength and vigour of the outward man; yet, as to their inward man, the strength and vigour of their minds and spirits were day by day renewed. O happy apostle! the cold blasts of persecution beating upon thy outward man, did by a spiritual antiperistasis increase the heat of grace within; thy soul is made fat with blows upon thy body, and battens with pricking and beating; every stone thrown at thee knocked thee nearer to Christ, the chief corner-stone: under all the storms and billows of affliction, thou, like Noah's ark, wert lift up nearer to heaven; and after every encounter, thy salvation is nearer than before. Well therefore mightest thou declare and say, *For this cause we faint not*.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Still our apostle proceeds in assigning reasons why all the afflictions which himself and others met with, were not only tolerable, but joyous; namely, because, 1. His afflictions were light: 2. Because they were short. They were light; but how? Not considered in themselves; so they were hard and heavy: thrice he was beaten with rods, five times he received forty stripes save one: but light, compared with the glory expected. Again, they were short; but for a moment, compared with eternity. Mark the gradation: for affliction there is glory: for light affliction, which is but for a moment, an eternal weight of glory. Observe farther, The apostle doth not barely say, that glory will be the consequent of affliction, but that affliction will be the cause of glory; *it worketh for us*. But how! Not as a meritorious cause: for alas! how can our afflictions deserve this happiness! What proportion can there be betwixt light and momentary afflictions, and an eternal weight of glory! But they work for us, as they are sanctified by God to us. His infinite mercy and goodness, his covenant truth and faithfulness, make his saints' afflictions a whipping-post to their corruptions; they purge our iniquity, and take away our sin, if we belong to God as his covenant children. But for wicked and obdurate sinners, alas! it is much otherwise: instead of being refined from their dross, and purged from their filth, by being in the furnace of affliction, it boils their scum and impurity more into them; and, like flints in the fire, they fly in the very face of God their refiner.

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

The last reason is assigned here why the apostle was kept from fainting in and under the pressure of the most heavy afflictions: he looked not at present, but future things; not at things seen, but unseen; not at things temporal, but eternal. Observe here, 1. What it was that the apostle, when on earth, made his main scope, his chief aim, grand design, and grand end. This is signified to us in the original word, *anagoraze*, which signifies to look as the archer doth at the mark he shoots at—

There were some things which he, his fellow-apostles, and all serious Christians with them, looked at. This is specified first negatively, *We look not at things seen*; at the things of this life, at sensible objects, be they bitter or sweet, be they comforts or crosses. Temporal things are temporary things; and we mind them not as the men of the world do, who make them their chief and principal aim and scope; no, we leave the world to the men of the world: *We look not at things which are seen*; But secondly, This is specified affirmatively, *We look at the things which are not seen*; the things of another life, things which are objects of faith, and not visible to fleshly eyes: we look at these, we make these our aim and scope: and the reason is subjoined why they made these things the matter of their choice, the objects of their desire and endeavour. This is intimated in the word *for*; *For the things which are seen are temporal*; that is, all the visible things of this life, whether comforts or crosses, whether prosperous or adverse, be it health or sickness, liberty or restraint, poverty or riches, honour or disgrace, life or death, they are all *σποδαίμα*, for a while, only for a short season, as the word signifies; therefore we do not much eye them, we trouble not our heads much about them; they are things of a higher nature we look at, such as neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard; and these are the durable things; *For the things which are not seen are eternal*. Learn hence, 1. That temporal things, or things that are seen, do take up the heads and hearts, the minds and thoughts, of the men of the world, and are the sum of their desires, and the substance of their endeavours: *We look not at the things which are seen*, but there are those that do; we make not them our aim and scope, but others look at them, wholly at them, can see nothing beyond them, and desire nothing besides them. Learn, 2. That things unseen, the things of eternity, and the invisible encouragements of another world, are the mark and scope which every real Christian is aiming at, and contending for: *We look at the things which are not seen*, and make them our aim and scope. Learn, 3. That the things not seen, or the things of another life and world, are eternal things; that is, such things as admit of no changes and alterations, of no gradations or successions, of no decay or consumption, of no future hopes and expectations, of no mixture or moderation, of no recovery or revocation, of no period or conclusion. O eternity! eternity! that vast, that boundless ocean of eternity! how does it swallow up our thoughts with wonder and amaze-

ment! God help us daily to consider of it, duly to prepare for it, and not to prefer the trifles of time before it; but make the wisest provision for the longest duration. Learn, 4. That which puts the weight upon things not seen, and renders them the proper objects of a Christian's aim and choice, is this, because they are eternal: that which chiefly casts the scale, and maketh things not seen to preponderate, is, because they are eternal things. It is eternity which transcendeth all expression, all conception, much more all our comprehension; that puts an infinite weight upon unseen things: *The things which are not seen are eternal.* This meditation, well digested, would work in us an holy indifferency towards all temporal things; it would moderate our esteem of them, our desires after them, our delight in them, and our grief for the want and loss of them; and sweeten all those troubles and trials, all those sufferings and afflictions, which we meet with in our passage through time unto eternity. Lord, take off, and turn away, our eyes from things which are seen, and help us to look at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

CHAP. V.

Our apostle having at the latter end of the foregoing chapter recorded the sufferings of himself and other believers for the sake of Christ, and the testimony of a good conscience, he comes in this chapter to give a reason why he did so courageously and perseveringly labour in the work of the ministry, notwithstanding the many difficulties and great dangers which he met with on every side for commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And he tells us, it was the well-grounded hopes of a future immortality which did support and bear up his spirit under all the pressures of human life. From whence we learn, That the difficulties and distresses of good men in this life, although they should end in death itself, are matter of no great terror to those who have a well-grounded confidence and good assurance of their blessed immortality. For thus our apostle speaks:

FOR we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle compares the body of a believer to an house, to an earthly house, and to an house of tabernacle: to an house, because of its comely fabric and composure, as also in regard of the inhabitant that dwells in it, the never-dying soul; to an earthly house, in regard of the matter of which it is composed, and in regard of the means by which it is sustained; and to an house of tabernacle, because such buildings com-

sist of slight and mean materials, they are soon set up, and as soon taken down. Observe, 2. The necessity of this earthly tabernacle of the body's dissolution by death; it must lie down, and be dissolved. 3. The believer's future happiness, after the body's present dissolution, asserted and declared: *They have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* Learn hence, 1. That it is the pleasure and will of God that his people should for a short time remain in this earthly tabernacle of the body. Learn, 2. That this earthly tabernacle of the believer's body, sooner or later, must by death be dissolved. Learn, 3. That after the dissolution of this earthly tabernacle of the body, all the faithful have an eternal habitation, a building of God, not made with hands, in the highest heavens. Learn, 4. That it is both the duty and interest of every sincere and serious Christian, to labour for the certain knowledge and full assurance of this happy privilege, and be able to say, *We know, &c.*

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven;

For in this, that is, in this ruinous earthly tabernacle. Observe here, The strength and vehemency of the saints' affection, *we groan*; the word signifies such a groaning as of a man that has a load or burden lying upon him, which makes him fetch his wind from his very bowels: as there are groans which proceed from sorrow, so there are groans which arise from desire and hope. Thus here, *We groan, earnestly desiring.* Observe, 2. What is the subject which the apostle's groaning desires were carried out after; namely, to be clothed with a celestial body, instead of that clogging body of earthly corruption which here they carried about with them, *earnestly desiring to be clothed upon, &c.* Learn thence, That such as do believe and wait for a blessed immortality, do groan for it, and earnestly desire it, because of the miseries and pressures by sin and sorrow in this present life; because they have already a taste of the happiness and glory of the life to come; and because the Holy Spirit doth excite and stir up these groaning desires in the hearts of believers; Rom. viii. 23. *We also, that have the first-fruits of the Spirit, do groan within ourselves.*

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

That is, if so be, at our passage hence, we shall have the happiness to be of the number of those who are found clothed

with glory, or clothed with holiness and good works, to fit us for our clothing in glory; that we may not be found naked in our natural turpitude of sin and spiritual nakedness, which will render us abominable in the sight of God. Learn hence. That none can groan or long for heaven but such as are clothed with a gospel-righteousness, that of justification, sanctification, and new obedience: none shall be clothed upon with glory hereafter, but such as are clothed with grace and holiness here.

4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Note here, That this groaning desire again mentioned by the apostle in this verse, with respect to the burden of the body, to get rid of it, is not either an unnatural desire, or a discontented desire, or a desire of death as death, or a desire to be unbowed, and without clothing for the soul; but he would be better clothed with a celestial body, that his mortal part might be swallowed up by immortal glory. As if the apostle had said, "As weary as I am of life, by means of sin and sorrow, by reason of corruption and affliction, yet I would not barely for the sake of that desire a dissolution, but for the hope's sake of eternal and immortal life." Learn hence. 1. That whilst the saints live in this earthly, mortal body, they are burdened with a heavy load of sin and affliction. 2. That believers, thus burdened, do in an holy manner groan and long for a better state. 3. That in that better state mortality shall be swallowed up of life. 4. That in that life we shall be clothed again with our own bodies, glorious and heavenly: *We groan, not to be unclothed, but clothed upon.*

5 Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

That is, he that hath wrought and appointed us, he that hath prepared and fitted us, for this glorious change, and hath set our souls a-longing for this immortal state, is God; who hath also given us by his Spirit those holy affections, fervent desires, and faithful endeavours, which are the earnest of heaven before we enjoy it. Learn hence, 1. That Almighty God doth fit and frame his people for that happy state of bliss and glory, which he has designed them for, and appointed them unto: *He*

that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God. Learn 2. That in the mean time whilst we are in this mortal state with the earnest of the Spirit, we have a earnest and foretaste of it in the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

6 Therefore are we always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord;

*We are confident, that is, by the Holy Spirit comfortably assured of a better state. They who have the earnest of the Spirit may be confident of their future glorious state. Or, we are confident; that is, we are of good courage, fearing neither death nor danger in the way of our duty, knowing that whilst we are at home here in the body, that is, whilst sojourning in the body as pilgrims and strangers, we are absent from the Lord; that is, we are detained from the blessed sight and enjoyment of God, and kept out of the possession of that happiness which makes heaven. Here the apostle plainly intimates, that whilst we remain in the body, we are detained from our happiness; and that as soon as we leave the body, we shall be admitted to our happiness. Learn, 1. That a Christian is not in his own proper home whilst he sojourneth in the body, and lives in his earthly tabernacle here below. His birth and parentage are from heaven, his treasure and inheritance in heaven, his kindred, and relations, and best friends are there, and there shall he longest abide. Learn, 2. That the true reason why the saints count themselves here not at home, is because they are absent from the Lord whilst present in the body: *Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.**

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight;)

That is, our condition here in this world is such, that we cannot see God face to face, but by faith only; whilst we are in the body, we do not see and enjoy, but believe and expect. Faith is the thing in expectation: sight is the thing in fruition; faith is a cloudy discovery of things at a distance; sight is a clear view and apprehension of things that are present. Learn, 1. That faith is for earth, and sight is for heaven. 2. That till we have sight, it is a great advantage that we have faith. 3. That if we now have faith, we may be well assured that ere long we shall have sight.

8 We are confident. *I say, and*

willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be-present with the Lord.

The original words, for *we are confident and willing*, denote first, courage and undaunted boldness with respect to death, and complacency and satisfaction in it. *We are willing*; the translation is too flat; *υποζουμεν*, *we are well pleased*. It is a grateful and desirable thing to us to leave the body: yet not in an absolute, but comparative consideration. We are willing *rather*; that is, rather than not see and enjoy the Lord, rather than be always here sinning and groaning, *we had rather be absent from the body, and present with the Lord*. Learn, 1. That our happiness in the world to come lies in our being present with the Lord. 2. That we are present with the Lord as soon as the soul quits and takes its leave and farewell of the body. 3. That a state of separation from the body is much more preferable to the saints than that of dwelling in the body. 4. That this desire, preference, and choice, arises from that confident assurance which they have of a better state, and of their interest in it; *We are confident, I say, &c.*

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

The word signifies, *to labour ambitiously*, as an ambitious courtier labours for his prince's favour. We labour, whether present in the body, or absent from the body, whether living or dying, that our persons and our services may be accepted with him, whenever we appear before him. Learn, 1. That to be accepted with the Lord is a very high honour. To have our persons accepted, and our performances acceptable, are high favours; the former is the ground of the latter, and Christ is the foundation of both, *Eph. i. 6*. Learn, 2. That it is a gracious person's great ambition and desire, his aim and scope, his design and endeavour, that living and dying he may find acceptance with God, and his actions be such as God may well like and approve of: *We ambitiously labour, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him*.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done in his body*, according to that he hath done, whether *it be good or bad*.

These words are fully descriptive of a future judgment. In which observe, 1. The necessity of a future judgment, *We must*, willing or unwilling. 2. The uni-

versality of this judgment, *We must all*. 3. The person by whom, and before whom, we must be judged, Christ. 4. The manner of this judgment, *All must appear*, and be made manifest, both persons and actions. 5. The matter about which we shall be judged, *The things done in the body*. 6. The end of all this inquisition, to be punished or rewarded according to our actions. Learn, 1. That there will certainly come a day, when every person that ever lived in this world, shall be judged by Jesus Christ: *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ*. Learn, 2. That every man's judgment and sentence at the great day shall proceed and be pronounced according to what he has done in the flesh, be it good or bad, *that every one may receive the things done in his body, &c.*

11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

That is, knowing the terror and dread of that terrible and dreadful day in which Christ will judge the whole race of mankind; and being persuaded of the truth and certainty of it ourselves, we endeavour to persuade all men by all means to fly from the wrath to come, by repentance and faith, that they may be found of God in peace in that solemn hour. Learn hence, That the knowledge and consideration of the present terrible judgments of God, and the future terrors of that great day, should move the ministers of God to persuade, and the people to be persuaded, to a careful and serious preparation for it. Such ministers as know and consider the terrors of the Lord, will both persuade others, and be persuaded themselves, to look after reconciliation and acceptance with God; that when Christ comes terribly, they may appear comfortably: *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men*. It follows, *But we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences*. As if he had said, We hope God hath discovered our sincerity unto you in some measure, as he is an observer of it, and witness to it himself. Learn hence, That then a minister has the full assurance of his sincerity, when he has the approbation of God and his own conscience, and also a testimony in the consciences of his people. This is gained by the purity of our doctrine, by the piety of our lives, and by the prudence of our conduct. When these are evident and manifest to the consciences of our people, how convincing is it to them, and comfortable unto us!

12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to *answer* them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

As if our apostle had said, "We commend not ourselves to you upon our own account, as if there were any need of it, with respect to us; but only to give you an occasion to vindicate us; and to glory to others on our behalf, when need requires, that you may have wherewith to answer the calumnies of the false apostles, who gloried much in outward appearance of piety and zeal, but not in purity of heart and upright intentions." Learn hence, That though the ministers of Christ have no itching desire to exalt themselves in a way of self-commendation, yet they are sometimes constrained to it in a way of self-vindication, and this is not only lawful but a duty; because scandals cast upon a good man reach farther than himself, they reflect upon others as well as himself, yea, they reflect upon God himself: therefore to be wiped off and rolled away.

13 For whether we be beside ourselves, *it is* to God; or whether we be sober, *it is* for your cause.

The holy apostle was sometimes so zealously transported and carried forth in his high actings for Jesus Christ, that the false apostles represented him as a frantic person, crazy, mad, and what not; "Be it so, (says the holy man,) it is unto God, in his cause, and to propagate his glory, and not my own: or if I be sober in my words and actions, it is for your benefit, not my own." Learn hence, That wicked and carnal men account and represent the holy servants of God as a sort of madmen. Workings of grace are sometimes so far above reason, that they seem to be without reason: there are several acts of holiness, which the profane world esteem as madness; as eminent self-denial, great seriousness in religion, their burning zeal, their holy singularity, their fervours of devotion, their patience and meekness under sufferings and reproaches. All these acts of holiness represent the saints as madmen to carnal men.

14 For the love of Christ constraineth us;—

That is, the infinite love of Christ in dying for us, constraineth us to live unto him, and do the utmost services for him. Some understand it passively, for the love

that Christ beareth us; others take it actively, for that love which we bear to him. Now this love is said to *constrain*. Some think it a metaphor from a woman in travail, that strives to be delivered of her burden; others, that it signifies to have one bound, and so much under power, that he cannot move without leave. The expression denotes the absolute empire which the love of Christ had over him, ruling all the inclinations of the heart, and the actions of his life. It signifies the sweet violence and force of love, by which the soul is overpowered, and cannot say nay; it does wholly possess us, rule and command us, keep us in its power, and makes us do whatever it would have us do. Learn hence, That the love of Christ has such a constraining power, and obliging force and efficacy upon the soul, that it inclines it to a willing performance of all duties, though attended with the greatest difficulties and dangers. Love is the spring of action, 'tis a forcible and compelling, 'tis an invincible, unconquerable affection: and it has such an influence from the consideration of what Christ is in himself, and of what he has done for us, and designed for us.

—Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15 And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

If one died for all, then were all dead. Some understand it of a death in sin; all were in a state of sin and death when Christ died for them. Others understand it mystically, when Christ died for all, all were then dead; that is, dead in Christ unto sin; intimating, that when Christ died, all believers were dead in him to sin and the world. As Christ died for sin, so ought all to die unto sin. Farther, Christ dying once for all, proveth the verity of his satisfaction, and the sufficiency of his satisfaction. What virtue was there in that death which merited life for all! And what love was there in our God to appoint one for all, and to accept one for all! That one so worthy in himself, that one so dear to God, should die, should die so willingly, should die so painfully, should die so shamefully, should die under a curse, to absolve from guilt, and discharge from condemnation! *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us!* Observe next, The great end and design of Christ in his death and resurrection for us; namely, 1. Negatively declared, that we should not live unto *ourselves*, to our own ease, profit, or honour;

gratifying our own wills, inclinations, and corrupt desires, serving our own interests and ends: but, positively, *to live unto him*, according to his word and will, in obedience to his commands, and with an eye at his glory, *who died* for our sins, *and rose again* for our justification. Had Christ only died for us, the favour had been inexpressible and unrequitable, and required us to live to his name and glory; but when he not only died for us, but rose again, and lives for ever in heaven, to pour down fresh benefits upon us, and to do good offices daily and hourly for us, how endearing are our obligations to love him, and to live unto him! Learn hence, 1. That by virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, Christians are both obliged to, and have obtained the grace of, newness of life, and holiness of conversation. Learn, 2. That it is the duty, and will be the endeavour, of all those that are quickened by the Spirit of Christ unto newness of life, to refer all their actions not to themselves, but unto him: none can do both, live to Christ and self together. His we are already; by creation, by redemption, by sanctification, by voluntary resignation, we live by him. Our spiritual life is from him; we expect hereafter to live with him; let us therefore now live unto him, even unto him that died for us, and rose again.

16 Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more.

These words probably were spoken by the apostle to rebuke the carnal boastings of some Jews, who gloried in their having seen Christ in the flesh before he died; the apostle directs them to a more spiritual knowledge of him, now since his resurrection, as more suitable to his glorified state: *q. d.* "What though you have eaten and drunk in Christ's presence when on earth, all that corporeal familiarity is ceased; it is his spiritual gracious presence which now you are to depend upon, and value yourselves by." For *henceforth know we no man after the flesh*: we value no man for his outward advantages, for his wisdom, riches, or learning. *Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh*, seeing and conversing with him when here on earth, yet must we *know him so*, and enjoy him as such, *no more*. Our carnal affections and relations to him must ever cease, now he is exalted into a spiritual and glorious condition. Learn hence, 1. That a bare knowing of Christ after the flesh ought to cease

among Christians. There is a knowledge of Christ after the flesh, since his ascension into heaven, namely, by a naked profession of his name without a conformity to his laws, and by acts of sensitive affection. Some by reading the history of our Saviour's passion, others by seeing in the sacramental elements a tragical representation of his crucifixion, do find their human passions stir and move; but if it rests here, without drawing forth our love to his person, and quickening our obedience to his commands; all this is but knowing Christ *after the flesh* to no spiritual or saving purposes. Learn, 2. That a bare knowledge of Christ after the flesh will do us no good, be of no comfort or advantage to us, as to our eternal salvation. It is not a fond affection to his person and memory, but obedience to his laws, that Christ values. It is observable, that an outward ceremonious respect to our Saviour's person was very little regarded by him when he was here upon earth; a serious attention to his doctrine was infinitely preferred by him before all that. Our love to Christ is better shown by religious services, than by passionate affections. We find, *St. John xx.* when Mary fell at Christ's feet, after he was risen, and embraced him, when she held him by the foot and worshipped him, when in an humble and affectionate devotion she lies prostrate before him, Christ forbids it, *Touch me not*. He rejects all these external testimonies of her love, which proceeded only from human affection; but he directs her to a more acceptable service, namely, to run and carry tidings of his resurrection to his disconsolate disciples, *Go to my disciples, and say, &c.* From whence I infer, That it is much more acceptable to Christ to be about his service, and doing good to our place and station, than performing any offices of human love and respect unto his person. Seeing, then, that this ceremonious respect pleased Christ, neither when on earth, nor now he is in heaven, *henceforth know we no man after the flesh*: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we *him* no more.

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

As if the apostle had said, "If any one amongst you pretend to be a Christian indeed, ingrafted into Christ, by baptism and regeneration, and is a member of his body; he is by regeneration made a new man, all the faculties of his soul are renewed: his principles, affections, and practices, are all

new: *Old things are passed, or passing away daily, the old carnal inclinations of mind are wearing off, the old will is changed, the old life is reformed; and in a word, whatever was old and carnal, is now become new and spiritual.* Behold all things are become new: new affections, new inclinations, new dispositions, a new course, and a new conversation. Nothing is new physically; he is the same person, he has the same faculties: but all things are new qualitatively; he is renewed in the spirit of his mind. Learn hence, 1. That all such as call themselves the disciples of Christ, and own themselves to be his followers, are and ought to be new creatures. This implies a real and inward, a thorough and prevailing change, both in heart and life; not a civil change, barely from profaneness to sobriety; not a sudden change, only under some great affliction or awakening providence; not a change from one sect or party of professors to another; but the change of the new creature consists in a new mind, a new will, a new judgment, new affections; in a new conversation, not in a new form and profession; the change of the new creature introduces the life of God, and produces the nearest likeness to God. Learn, 2. That this new creation, wrought in a man by the word and Spirit of God, is an indubitable evidence of his interest in Christ, and title to salvation; for where the new creature is, there all the saving graces of the Spirit are, as a pledge and an earnest of glory and happiness.

18 And all things are of God,—

That is, all those things forementioned belonging to this new spiritual creation, are of God, as the author and efficient cause of them. Learn, That God is the original author of the new creature, and of all things belonging thereunto. This appears partly from the nature of the work, 'tis a new creation; and partly from the objects of the work, the persons wrought upon. They are averse from God, in enmity to him, and rebellion against him, dead in sin, under the dominion of Satan. Well therefore might the apostle say, *All these things are of God.*

—Who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

In these words the apostle gives us a

short but full account of the grand doctrine of a sinner's reconciliation unto God by the death of Christ, which is the principal subject and substantial part of the gospel. Where observe, 1. The privilege itself, *reconciliation*; this is two-fold; *fundamental*, in the death of Christ, he is our peace: God laid the foundation of our peace and reconciliation with himself in the death of his Son: *actual*, in the application of it, on our part, by faith. The death of Christ rendered God reconcilable. Faith renders him actually reconciled. Observe, 2. The Author of this reconciliation, God the Father: he was the Person wronged by sin, declaring his anger against the sinner: hence we are said to have access to the Father through Christ, and by the Spirit. The Son brings us to the Father, and the Spirit directs us to the Son; Christ takes away God's enmity against us, and the Spirit takes away our enmity against God. Observe, 3. The medium or mean by which we become reconciled to God, *Jesus Christ*; Christ was the meritorious cause of this privilege; Christ is the centre of that agreement between the justice of God and the mercy of God. Observe, 4. The parties at variance, and made one by reconciliation: God and the world, God and mankind. Almighty God, in consideration of Christ's death, did so far reconcile and forgive the offending world, as to offer them pardon of sin, and salvation by a Redeemer, upon a condition of their believing acceptance: but none are actually reconciled but believers, who actually accept the terms and conditions of peace and reconciliation by faith, which is a necessary receptive qualification. Learn hence, That there is an happy peace and reconciliation made in and by Jesus Christ, between an offended God and an offending world. Reconciliation is a repairing of decayed friendship, or the making up of a breach between two that were formerly friends, but now at variance. The reconciliation is mutual, because the enmity is such; yet the scripture speaks more of our being reconciled to God, than of God's being reconciled to us, because we are in the fault, and not God; we the cause of the breach, we offended God, not God us; and because we have the benefit of this reconciliation, and not God, 'tis no profit to him that we are at peace with him; and because all the difficulty of being reconciled lies on our part, and not God's.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God,

Observe here, 1. The minister's office and employment declared: they are *ambassadors for Christ*; ambassadors from God to man, and as ambassadors they have their mission, their commission, from a great Prince, about great concerns; they must be faithful to their instructions; they are inviolable by the law of nations, and their embassy must be received upon pain of displeasure. Where let us remark the wonderful goodness and wisdom of God, in appointing men of the same level with us, and not angels superior to us, to dispense the mystery of reconciliation to us. As God deals more familiarly with us in this way, (for we cannot bear the voice of God, or the sight of angels,) so there is more certainty in this way, because ministers must deceive their own souls, if they deceive us: and herein God magnifies his own power, and lets us know, that the efficacy of the gospel is from him the Author, and not from man the dispenser. Observe, 2. The minister's duty discovered: in God's name, and Christ's stead, to entreat, beseech, and persuade sinners to become reconciled unto God. Here note, 1. That God and man were once friends. 2. That God and man are now enemies. 3. That man, and not God, first made the breach of friendship, and occasioned that unhappy controversy, which is now depending between God and man. 4. That though man was first in the breach, yet God is the first in the offer of reconciliation. 5. That therefore it is the highest duty and chiefest interest of man to accept of terms of peace and reconciliation with God. 6. That in order to all this, the great duty incumbent upon the ministers of the gospel, is this, with all earnestness to press upon people the doctrine of reconciliation, and to use all arguments with them, to persuade them to become reconciled unto God.

21 For he hath made him *to be sin* for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Observe here, 1. The spotless innocence of our Lord Jesus Christ, as mediator, declared: *He knew no sin*; that is, practically and experimentally, he knew it not so as to commit it in the least degree; he was a pure, innocent, and sinless, Person: but theoretically and speculatively he did know sin. He well understood its nature, its effects, and fruits: none knew the bitter fruits of sin so well as our blessed Saviour. Observe, 2. God's ordination of Christ with reference unto sin, *He hath made him to be sin*; not made him a sinner, but a sin-offering, a sacrifice for sin. *Made*; that is,

ordained a sacrifice to expiate sin, and to bear the punishment due to sinners. Observe, 3. The end of this ordination with respect to us, *That we might be made the righteousness of God in him*. Here note, The righteousness of the Mediator is called the righteousness of God; because, 1. It was the righteousness of that Person who was God. 2. Because the only wise God found out and appointed it. And, 3. Because it is accepted by God; and the penitent believer, for the sake of it, looked upon as righteous and justified. Learn hence, 1. That sin must have a sacrifice. He hath made him to be sin; that is, a sin-offering, or a sacrifice to expiate sin. Under the law the sacrifice was called *sin*, because the sin of the person was laid upon the sacrifice; there was a sort of a translation of the sin from the sinner to the sacrifice. Learn, 2. That Jesus Christ was made a sacrifice for our sin. Our guilt was imputed to him, and our punishment was borne by him; which made Luther call Christ "the greatest sinner in the world;" not that he had any sin in his nature, or in his life, but because the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. Learn, 3. That Jesus Christ being made sin for us, is the meritorious cause and means of our being made the righteousness of God in him. Surely God may be as just in pardoning us, who have no righteousness of our own, as in condemning his own Son, who had no sin of his own. Have we broken his royal and righteous law? yet Christ has kept it, and fulfilled all righteousness. Have we sinned against mercy? yet Christ has suffered without mercy: and all this by the ordination and appointment of God the Father, who made his own and only Son to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

CHAP. VI.

Our apostle, having despatched the apologetical or excusatory part of his epistle, comes now to the hortatory part of it. St. Paul's epistles excel both in matter and method. Their matter is principally reconciliation with God, and justification through faith in Christ; what subjects either so sweet or so profitable? Their method is by way of doctrine and use: a method, which if it be despised, St. Paul's writings cannot be duly valued.

In the last words of the foregoing chapter, he positively asserted the great doctrine of reconciliation through Christ. Now in the beginning of this chapter, he draws inferences from that doctrine, by way of application. The first of which we have in the following words:

WE then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

Here note, 1. The nature of the ministe-

rial function: The ministry is a work, an arduous and laborious work; neither angels nor men are of themselves sufficient for it, without proportionable assistance from God. Ministers are *workers*. Note, 2. They are workers *together*; they join together with one voice, with one cry, beseeching sinners to be reconciled unto God. All the ministers of Christ are fellow-labourers, workers together in God's harvest-field; that which is the work of one, is the work of all; they should all join in it, and rejoice together in the success of it; not only labour with, but bless God for the services and success of, each other. Lord! how sad it is to see the ministers of God divided in their work and way, when one rejoiceth in that which to another is cause of mourning! Note, 3. Ministers are workers together with God, as well as with one another; they are subordinate instruments working by him, but not co-ordinate causes producing with him the work of conversion in the souls of men; not as if they could communicate any power or strength to the working of grace by the preaching of the word, 1 Cor. iii. 6. *Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?* Observe, 4. The exhortation, or cautionary direction, given; *We beseech you, receive not the grace of God in vain*; where by the *grace of God*, is meant the grace of the gospel; because it is graciously and freely bestowed upon a people, and because the matter and message which it brings is grace. The law discovers God's will, the gospel discovers his good will: and by *receiving this grace in vain*, is meant the receiving the gospel unfruitfully, unprofitably, and ineffectually; when we do not receive it with a due estimation, with fervency of affection, with a fiducial application; when it doth not purify the heart, reform the life, and save the soul. It is not the receiving of the gospel into our houses, into our heads, into our mouths, but into our hearts, that will bring us to heaven.

2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

These words are taken from the prophet Isaiah, (xlii. 8.) They are a promise which God the Father made to Christ as Mediator, That in the great work of saving his church, the Father would accept and succour him as the Head of the church: *I have heard thee in an accepted time, in the day of salvation.* Here note, There is a two-

fold day of salvation: the one was Christ's day for the purchase of salvation; the other is our duty, for the application. 1. Christ had a season assigned him for the imputation or purchase of salvation; and he set in, and complied with that season, and it became an acceptable time with respect to him. 2. We have also our season allotted us by God, for the application of Christ and his benefits to our souls. Behold, now is our accepted time, now is our day of salvation: let us prize it highly, and improve it faithfully. 'Tis a day, and that is but a short space of time; 'tis a day, and therefore continually spending: 'tis a day, therefore when once gone is irrecoverably gone. Our working day is a wasting day; 'tis a day, and that will be followed with a night, in which none can work, but only lament their folly in not working: *Behold then, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.*

3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

Observe here, 1. The nature and quality of the work which the ambassadors of Christ are called to and do labour in; *a ministry*. Observe, 2. What was the desire and aim, the care and endeavour of the apostles then, ought to be the study of every minister now; namely, to avoid offence, and that universally, both as to persons and things, *giving no offence in any thing*. Observe, 3. What was the ground and reason of this care and endeavour to give no offence; namely, *that the ministry be not blamed*. Learn, That it is the standing duty of all the ministers of Christ so to perform their ministerial office, that they give no just offence in any thing to any person, that so the ministry committed to them may not be blamed. We must give no offence by our words and speeches in common conversation, no offence by unsound doctrine, by personal reflections, no offence by gross, careless, and negligent omissions, or by rude and irreverent indecencies, or by any affected singularities in our administrations; but especially give no offence by a bad life and scandalous conversation.

4 But in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, 5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

Observe here, 1. The great care which the holy apostle took to approve himself unto God, in the exercise of his ministry:

In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God. Observe, 2. What an approved minister must do and endure, in order to the obtaining the ends of his ministry: if he be called to it, he must bear up against all discouragements, and encounter all oppositions; let the way be what it will, fair or foul, a green carpet way, or dirty, poachy way, he must stick at nothing, but go through thick and thin, patiently enduring afflictions of all sorts, and cheerfully undergoing sufferings of all kinds, and exercising all manner of self-denial, for the gospel's sake. Behold here, how the ministers of Christ, that will approve themselves unto God, must run all hazards, and venture through all extremities: they must work in heat and cold, in fire and frost, in all sorts of providences from God, in all sorts of aspects from men, fearing neither the face nor frowns of any. For though every gospel minister attains not to St. Paul's zeal, and holy fortitude and courage, yet he has a truth of zeal, and such a firmness of resolution, as will, according to his measure, carry him through a world of evils and incumbrances, in the doing of that good, which duty and conscience doth oblige him to, and call for: *In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in labours, in watchings, in fastings.*

6 By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, 7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report:—

The apostle, in the foregoing verses, had declared how many difficulties and dangers must be encountered by him that will attain the ends of his ministry, and approve himself unto God in integrity and uprightness; here he shows by how many ways and means the work of the ministry is promoted, and how the ministers of the gospel must be qualified for it: namely, *by pureness of conversation, by knowledge of divine mysteries and study of the holy scriptures, by long-suffering under all provocations, by kindness towards all men, by the gifts and assistances of the Holy Ghost, by the word of truth clearly preached, and by the power of God confirming it; by the armour of righteousness, which completely covers and protects us on the right hand and on the left, both in prosperity and adversity; by passing through honour and dishonour, by going through evil report and good report.* Here

note, That the ministers of God do approve themselves, and trial is made of them, as well by the things on the right hand as on the left. A minister of Christ is tried as well by honour as disgrace, as well by praise as by disparagement. The good report which we meet with in the world, is certainly as great, yea, a more dangerous temptation, than the ill reports we pass under. 'Tis a great trial to a minister to be dispraised and despised, to have dirt thrown undeservedly in his face; but verily it is as great a trial to be praised, commended, and applauded, to be lifted up in the thoughts and upon the tongues of men. Solomon has an excellent proverb to this purpose, Prov. xxvii. 21. *As the refining-pot for silver, and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise*; that is, a man is tried by his praise, as really as silver is tried in the refining-pot, or gold in the furnace. Whenever a minister is praised, he is tried; his humility is tried, his self-denial is tried; when he is praised by men, he is tried whether he can give the entire praise to God. When people cry up such and such a preacher, they put him into the refining-pot; and he that is but dross, consumes. Let ministers remember there are trials on the right hand, as well as on the left; that passing through honour, and going through good reports, are great trials, as well as passing through dishonour and evil reports. God prepare us for both! ,

—As deceivers, and yet true. 9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live: as chastened, and not killed; 10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

As if the apostle had said, Verily our life is made up of seemings, but not real contradictions. The wise men of the world look upon us as deceivers, but we are the true dispensers of the word of life unto them; we are looked upon by the world as unknown, obscure persons; but we are well known to God and good men by our doctrine and miracles; we are as dying persons daily, by our passing through so many perils, and by being exposed to continual persecutions, and yet you see we are still alive; and we are sometimes chastened by God, as well as persecuted by men, but we are not killed, nor given over unto death. Outwardly we are sorrowful, but inwardly always rejoicing in God, and in the testimony of a good conscience; in wordly goods and outward circumstances

we are very poor, yet making many spiritually rich in grace and good works. We have nothing we can call our own, yet in Christ all things are ours. Hence observe, What has been the lot and portion of the faithful ambassadors and ministers of Christ from the first beginning of Christianity; the dirt of a thousand scandals have been thrown upon their faces, which in the day of Christ's appearance will be as crowns upon their heads. Observe, 2. That all outward evils are to be received by the ministers and members of Christ, in the same manner, and with the same mind, that good things are received with. Honour and dishonour, good report and evil report, must be entertained with the same evenness and constancy of mind, because God is the same in all variety of estates. Though men change their opinions of us, yet God changes not his judgment concerning us: he loves his ministers and members when poor, as well as when rich; when the world smites us, as well as when it smiles upon us; therefore if God be the same to us at all times, it is our wisdom and duty to keep the temper of our minds, and to be always the same to him, and to ourselves. Whatever we meet with from the world, we have no reason to be dissatisfied if our integrity be safe. Observe, 3. How rich the apostle was without earthly riches, and how abounding in wealth, when he had nothing of worldly treasure to rejoice in: *Having nothing, yet he possessed all things.* But how? and in what sense? Answer, He and they possessed all things, 1. In Christ, by whom they had a title to all things. 2. They had all things in the covenant, favour, and grace of God; he hath all things, who hath him that hath all things. 3. They had all things virtually in that contentment of mind which they did enjoy: they possessed all things in possessing themselves; and wanted nothing which they could deny themselves. The contented man is only rich; he is not rich that has much, but he that has enough; that man is poor that covets more. 4. They possessed all things eventually; they had the good of all things, when they had not the actual possession of all things; their poverty was a blessing, and their very wants, in the event, worked for good. 5. They possessed all things in future expectation: they looked and longed for heaven and everlasting happiness, which would swallow up their desires with fruition; for he that overcometh shall inherit all things, *Rev. xxi.* 7. This is this apostolical paradox unriddled, *As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.* True faith apprehends and enjoys all

things in God, which it wanteth in the creature.

11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. 12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. 13 Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto *my* children,) be ye also enlarged.

These words are very pathetic and expressive of St. Paul's most affectionate and ardent love towards the Corinthians, whom he had been an happy instrument to convert unto Christianity. He tells them, *his mouth was opened to them*, not to receive, but to bestow; his mouth was open to fill them with the treasures of gospel knowledge, not to be filled by them; and *his heart*, as well as his mouth, was open unto them, and at their service. If therefore they were straitened in affection towards him, who was thus enlarged in heart and mouth, by tongue and pen, towards them, it must be through mistakes and misapprehensions on their part; therefore in a way of recompence he challenges it as just and fit, that the same reciprocal love be bestowed upon him their spiritual father, as he had manifested towards them his beloved children. Learn hence, That there is no stronger love, nor more endeared affection, between any relations upon earth, than between such ministers of Christ and their beloved people, whom they have been happily instrumental to convert to God: *O ye Corinthians, our heart is enlarged towards you.*

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

The holy apostle closes this chapter with an exhortation to avoid all intimacy with idolaters, either in civil affairs, in marriages, or in religious worship, lest they be brought into communion with their idolatry; there being no more agreement between a believer and an idolater, than betwixt light and darkness, betwixt Christ and Satan. And, as we must not join with idolaters in spiritual communion or religious worship, so should we have no communion with them in marriages; that having proved a dangerous snare to the souls of many, our divines have justly pro-

heart, that we could live with you, and die for you, to promote your spiritual and eternal welfare. Behold how large a room the people of God have in the affections of his ministers, how near do they lie to their hearts; and so passionately desirous are they of their people's salvation, that they could even lay down their lives, and die, to promote their temporal and eternal advantage! Observe, 4. How the apostle gloried in, and was comforted by, the Corinthians in the midst of all their afflictions, by the report he had of their repentance, obedience, and liberality: *Great is my glorying in you; I am filled with comfort, and exceeding joyful in the midst of all my tribulations.* As if he had said, "Verily, the report I have made of your repentance and reformation, upon the receiving of my former epistles, has filled me with such a weight of joy, as overbalances all the afflictions and tribulations which I meet with for the gospel." Learn hence, That the repentance and reformation of any of our people, by the blessing of God upon our ministerial endeavours, is matter of great rejoicing and glorying to us the ministers of God, who desire above all things the conversion, edification, and salvation, of the souls of our people: *Great is my glorying in you; I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful.*

5 For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side: without *were* fightings, within *were* fears. 6 Nevertheless God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; 7 And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me: so that I rejoiced the more.

Observe here, 1. When the apostle was come from Ephesus to Macedonia, how great a conflict he had, both from without and within: from without by persecution and opposition from the Jews and Gentiles; and from within, by fears lest the false apostles should have perverted any of his young converts from the simplicity which is in Christ: or, fearing lest the Corinthians being tender and weak in the faith, the violence of persecution, and the strength of temptation, should cause them to apostatize from their religion, and backslide from their holy profession. Observe, 2. A most endearing title given to Almighty

God: *He comforteth all those that are cast down.* This is his dear title: he esteems himself more honoured with the amiable and endearing title of a *Comforter* and a *Father*, than with the glorious title of a *Creator* and a *Sovereign*. He is more pleased in doing us good, than we can be pleased in receiving of it; and can as soon forget himself, as forget his children. Observe, 3. The instrumental means which God has made use of for the apostle's consolation, support, and relief; namely, the coming of Titus. First, *God comforted us by the coming of Titus.* Mark, he doth not entitle Titus, but God, by Titus, to the comfort he received. Whoever is the instrumental cause, God is the principal efficient cause of our consolation and comfort. It shows an holy frame of heart, when we stay not in creatures, but are carried to God as the author of our comforts and crosses. Secondly, the glad tidings and good news which Titus brought, as touching the Corinthians' earnest desire to have all things amiss rectified, their sorrow expressed for the sin repented, their fervent affection towards the apostle, their grief for offending him, their zeal to vindicate him; all these were matter of comfort and exceeding consolation to the apostle, under all his disquietness in Macedonia. Learn hence, That when troubles both from without and within do oppress the minds, and even sink the spirits, of the ministers of God; if they can but see the success of their labours in the lives of their people, that they are humbled for sin and turned from it; this is matter of unspeakable consolation at present, and will be their crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ. When Titus told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind, I rejoiced the more.

8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it *were* but for a season. 9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry, after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

As if the apostle had said, "Although in my former epistle I wrote somewhat sharply to you, by reason of the many abuses that were crept in amongst you; I do not now repent of that severity, because it produceth a thorough and effectual reformation; at first I did repent of it, being unwilling to put you to grief; for I was troubled myself, because I was necessitat-

ed to trouble you. However, now I rejoice, not in your grief as such, but because your sorrow was a godly sorrow, and wrought repentance, which is so necessary to forgiveness: so that my plain-dealing with you has evidently been no damage, but an advantage to you. Learn hence, That the faithful ministers of Christ must by no means omit the duty of sharp reproof, nor neglect to bring the censures of the church upon notorious offenders, how ungrateful soever the work is, either to themselves or others. Learn, 2. That there is good ground to hope, that when the censures of the church are duly executed, they will have their desired effects, by bringing the offenders to repentance; and by repentance to remission and salvation: I rejoice, *that ye sorrowed to repentance, for ye sorrowed after a godly sort.*

10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of:—

Note here, That sorrow for sin will be of no advantage or avail upon us, if it be not godly sorrow, or a *sorrow according to God*, as it runs in the original. Now it may be called a sorrow according to God, when it is a sorrow wrought in us by the Spirit of God, in obedience to the command of God, and with an eye at the glory of God: when it has sin, and not wrath, for its object; sin as a wrong to God, as a contempt to his sovereignty, and a contrariety to his holiness. Again, it is then a godly sorrow, when it puts us upon a high prizing of Jesus Christ, who became a sacrifice for sin: and prompts us to a cordial and unfeigned forsaking of all sin, to such a turning from it, as is resolved against all returning to it.

—But the sorrow of the world worketh death.

The sorrow of the world may be taken two ways: 1. For the sorrow of worldly men, whose sorrow for sin is only a vexing of their hearts, not a breaking or humbling of their hearts: which being separate from true faith, and without any purpose to leave sin, worketh death, by wearing out the natural life lingeringly, and sometimes destroying the natural life violently, as in the case of Judas. 2. By the sorrow of the world, may be understood a sorrow for worldly things, a sorrow for worldly losses and disappointments. This is sinful, when it is excessive: and as it is prejudicial to the soul, so doth it hurt the body, and hasteneth death. Worldly sorrow is a killing sorrow: *Godly sorrow worketh repentance: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.*

11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

The apostle, in the foregoing verse, had declared, that godly sorrow, or a sorrow wrought by the Spirit of God, worketh true repentance, and produceth a thorough reformation, not to be repented of: now in this verse he proves, that the Corinthians' sorrow for the incestuous person's sin was of this nature, namely, a godly sorrow, because it produced such excellent effects and fruits as godly sorrow is wont to do: seven of which he here reckons up; 1. *Care*, or an holy *carefulness* to amend what is amiss for time to come, by shunning and avoiding all occasions and temptations that lead to sin. He that truly repenteth is careful not to sin again. 2. *Clearing of themselves*: that they did not approve the fact of the incestuous person, but did inflict the church's censures upon him, and so put away evil from amongst them. 3. *Indignation against sin*: this is found where godly sorrow is found; the heart rises, swells, and boils against sin; we are then angry and sin not, when we are angry at sin, and with ourselves at sinning. 4. *Fear*: a true penitent fears to offend; and that he may not offend, doth nourish in himself an holy fear of God, and an humble fear of himself. There is found with him a fear of reverence, from an awful apprehension of the holiness and majesty of God, and also a fear of diligence and vigilance, watching and warring against sin, that it may not set upon us and surprise us for the time to come. 5. *Vehement desire*, after a thorough reformation, and to rectify whatever is amiss; a desire to be rid of all sin, and in the mean time conflicting with it, and groaning under it. 6. *Zeal*: this is an affection in a true penitent, compounded of love and anger. Be zealous and repent, is Christ's own call, *Rev. iii. 19.* This will make a penitent persist in the exercise and expression of his godly sorrow for sin, and persevere in his course of mortification, in defiance of all opposition made against him. 7. *Revenge*. This is the result of zeal, when our zeal boils into revenge, and puts us upon self-castigations; not so much upon our bodies with whips and scourges, but by the abatement of lust which stirreth in us, buffeting the

flesh, and bringing it into subjection. And this revenge leads the penitent also to make satisfaction for wrongs done, either by open confession, or secret restitution, *In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.* As if the apostle had said, "By these fore-mentioned acts of yours, the body of you hath shown that you did not approve of the incestuous person's sin, but evidenced, by your sorrow for it that you are clear of it." Learn hence, 1. That there is no way to get clear of the guilt of other men's sins, but by duly mourning for them: *Now you are clear of this matter.* Learn, 2. That true repentance for sin clears us from the guilt of it, both in the sight of God and man; and if so, it is both uncharitable and unchristian to stigmatize or reproach any person for the sin which we either know or believe he hath truly repented of.

12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, *I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.*

Here the apostle tells them, that he did not write so passionately and severely to them, only or chiefly for the incestuous person's sake who had done the wrong, that he might be punished; nor for his sake that had suffered the wrong, namely, the injured father, out of a particular kindness to have him righted; but that his general care, solicitude, and concern for them, the whole church of Corinth, to remove sin and scandal from them, might appear unto them.

13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

That is, in all the fore-mentioned effects and fruits, signs and evidences, of a true repentance, which were found in you, and are matter of great comfort to you, we are also comforted with you; and we also had a superadded joy, for the joy that Titus conceived, upon his understanding of your affairs; also your ready compliance with the duties and directions given you in my former epistle, did wonderfully refresh and rejoice his spirit; and in all these your consolations and comforts am I comforted. Hence learn, That such is the intimate and endeared union between the ministers and members of Jesus Christ, that they are comforted with one anothers comforts, and

afflicted with each others sorrows and sufferings.

14 For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which *I made before Titus, is found a truth.* 15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. 16 I rejoice, therefore, that I have confidence in you in all things.

Observe here, How the apostle had formerly taken occasion to speak boastingly, and not without assurance, concerning the church of Corinth. "Now," says the apostle, "whatever I said of you is as infallibly and certainly true, as what I have heretofore either written or spoken to you." Happy is it when a minister's commendations of his people unto others, are not contradicted or gainsaid by the people themselves, but confirmed greatly. Here, what St. Paul had boasted of the Corinthians, Titus found a truth. Observe next, With what inward affection Titus did embrace and receive the Corinthians, remembering with what great deference and regard they had received him: *he is greatly affected towards you, upon his finding you so obedient to me.* Nothing doth more endear a people to the ministers of Christ, than to find them obedient to their spiritual guides in things pertaining to godliness and religion: *The affection of Titus is more abundant towards you, whilst he remembers the obedience of you all.* Observe lastly, What confidence the apostle had, that the church of Corinth would hearken to, and comply with, his future admonitions, exhortations, and reproofs: *I have confidence in you in all things.* It is a blessed thing when the ministers of the gospel and their beloved people have a mutual confidence in each other, and when that confidence on either side is not broken, but preserved and increased between them all their days: when they can say of each other, as doth the apostle here, *I rejoice that I have confidence in you in all things.*

CHAP. VIII.

The design and scope of our apostle in this and the following chapter, is to excite and stir up the Corinthians to a liberal contribution of their charity towards the poor saints in Jerusalem and Judea; and this he does by several arguments; as, namely, by the example of the Macedonians, by commendations of their former forwardness, by the example of Christ, and by the special benefit and advantage which would certainly

redound to themselves thereby. The former of these arguments is propounded, ver. 1.

MOREOVER, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 How that, in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

The first argument which our apostle makes use of to excite the charity of the Corinthians, is drawn from the example of the Macedonians, into whose hearts God had poured that excellent grace of charity; insomuch that the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and other churches in the region of Macedonia, though under great trials and afflictions themselves: yet such was their joy in, and their affection to, the Christian profession, that notwithstanding their deep poverty, they abounded in their liberality towards the necessities of the poor saints in Jerusalem and Judea. Note here, 1. The root from which all acceptable charity to the members of Christ must rise and spring, namely, from the *grace of God*; from an inward principle of love to God, in obedience to his command, and with a pure and fixed eye at his glory. Liberality to the poor distressed members of Christ, as such, must flow from that habit of divine love, by which men are taught of God to love one another; for though from a natural sympathy and compassion men may relieve the afflicted, as men, yet without a gracious inclination they cannot do good to them, as members of the household of faith. Charity then is here called *the grace of God*, because it proceeds from a gracious disposition wrought in the heart by God, as the root and spring, the motive and attractive, of it. Note here, 2. The condition which the churches of Macedonia were in themselves; when they thus liberally and cheerfully administered to the necessities of others, they were first under great affliction, and then in great poverty themselves: and yet *the riches of their liberality* are here said to *abound*. From hence learn, That poverty excuses not from charity: if we have nothing actually to give, God accepts the inclination of the mind, and a willing desire. If we have but little to give, God will accept of our mite, and reward us for that little, if given for his sake. It is not the quantity of the gift, but the good affection of the giver, that God's eye is upon. If we give but a cup of cold water to a disciple, and as a disciple, God accepts it and rewards it, provided we have *nothing better to give*; for if our charity

be not in some degree proportionable to what we have, it will not be acceptable, but we shall miss of its reward.

3 For to *their power*, (I bear record,) yea, and beyond *their power*, *they were willing of themselves*; 4 Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

Three things are here recorded as the glory of the Macedonians' charity. 1. It was profusely liberal beyond their ability: *To their power, yea, and beyond their power, they were ready*. Though, generally speaking, we are to consult our own ability and present circumstances in all our charitable distributions; yet there may be, and sometimes are, such emergent occasions, as may make it a necessary duty to administer to others' necessities far beyond our own ability. 2. Their charity was purely voluntary: *They were willing of themselves*; that is, unsolicited by the apostle, unasked by any other, only prompted to it by the grace of God: they made a collection amongst themselves freely and cheerfully. 3. Their charity was accompanied with importunity to the apostle to receive and distribute it. He was so far from entreating them to give, that they entreated him to receive their collection, and to take care for its conveyance to them, and distribution among them: *Praying us with much entreaty, that we would receive this their gift, and fellowship of ministry to the saints*.

5 And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their *ownelves* to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

As if the apostle had said, "Verily these Macedonians, in the liberal distribution of their alms to the poor Christians, have exceeded our hopes and expectation." Wherein?—First, they gave their *ownelves* to the Lord, and then unto us by the will of God. They gave themselves, their *ownelves*, first to the Lord. To give a man's self to the Lord, is more than to give all his estate to him, though, strictly speaking, it is rather a debt than a gift; for we owe ourselves to the Lord. And, O, how infinitely shall we gain by this giving! he gains all, who gives his all to God: God will return it with advantage to him. Next, the Macedonians, says the apostle, gave themselves unto us by the will of God; that is, they resigned themselves up to us, to be employed by us in such services as we thought meet. It

seems they were ready to assist the poor saints, as well with their persons as with their purses. From the Macedonians giving themselves first to the Lord, and then to the church's service, in all charitable distributions, we learn, That he that does not first dedicate himself, will never dedicate his estate to God; but he that by a deliberate and voluntary dedication gives himself to God, will keep back nothing that he requires from him; yea, he will look upon all that he has and is as the Lord's. Not an inch of his time, not a penny in his purse, but is to be employed by, and improved for, God. He looks upon God as the owner and proprietor of all, and himself as the steward and dispenser only. O! let us, in imitation of these noble, though poor Macedonians, first give ourselves to the Lord, and then we shall never withhold any thing that is ours from him.

6 Inasmuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. 7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. 8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

Here our apostle proceeds to make use of several other arguments to persuade the Corinthians to the exercise of the duty and grace of charity; as, namely, 1. Because he had desired Titus to go to them; and as he had in his last visit began to stir them up to this duty, and to exercise this grace, so he would farther promote and bring it to perfection. And, 2. Because they abounded in other graces and gifts; as namely, in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, &c. therefore they ought to abound in this grace also, otherwise they would not be complete in the whole will of God. 3. Because hereby they would testify the sincerity of their love to the saints. 'Tis not good works, but charitable deeds, that evidence the truth of our love to our fellow-members in Christ; not saying, *Be ye warmed, or be ye clothed*; but distributing to their necessities according to our abilities. Yet observe, The apostle doth not command their purses, and require so much of them for charity; he mentions no particular sum, much less doth he command them to give away all their estates, and live upon a common

stock, and leave nothing to themselves which they could call their own; for if a man has nothing of his own, there is no room for liberality. There must be prudence then in the exercise of our charity, prudence in finding out proper objects for our charity, prudence in timing of our charity, prudence in the measure of our charity, and prudence in the end which we propound to ourselves in the exercise of our charity.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Here we have the grand motive used by the apostle to excite their charity, namely, the example of Christ, who impoverished himself to enrich us, and emptied himself to fill us; therefore should we be ready to administer unto others: *Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* Observe hence, 1. A description of Christ in his divine nature, as God: he was originally, essentially, and eternally rich, that is, in his Godhead. All the riches that Christ now has in his state of exaltation, he had from all eternity; before his humiliation, with respect to his divine nature, he was rich. Observe, 2. A description of Christ in his human nature: he became poor; that is, in the day of his incarnation, when he assumed our flesh, and was made manifest in our nature, he impoverished himself: though he was rich, yet he became poor. Observe, 3. The persons for whose sake he did thus impoverish himself: *For our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.* Observe, 4. The moving, impelling, or impulsive cause, of this condescension in Christ, and that was the graciousness of his nature: *Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Observe, 5. The use and improvement which the apostle makes of this gracious dignation and condescension in Jesus Christ: and that was by way of argument, to excite the believing Corinthians to exercise their charity towards the poor saints which were at Jerusalem. Learn from hence, That the extensive charity and wonderful compassion of Christ towards us sinners, hath both the force of an argument to excite us to, and also the nature of a rule to direct us in, the exercise of our charity towards all our fellow-brethren and members of Christ: *Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.*

10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who

have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. 11 Now, therefore, perform the doing of it; that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have. 12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

Here the apostle proceeds to a fresh argument for the quickening and exciting the Corinthians' charity, drawn from their own reputation. He had heard that a year ago, upon writing his former epistle, they had made several collections, at several times, as their gains came in; his advice therefore is, that they perfect and complete the good work which they had undertaken; and that as there was a readiness and willingness of mind then, so there might be a performance of their good resolutions now. For whatsoever is given to God, is accepted according to what a man has, and it is not expected he should give according to what he has not. Learn hence, That God interprets and accepts the charity of men according to the largeness of their hearts, and not according to the straitness of their fortunes. It is not so much the quantity of the gift, as the good will and cheerful mind of the giver, that God looks at; *If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted.* Learn farther, That to do any good with a willing mind, be it little or much, is very acceptable to God; if there be little of the purse, and much of the heart in it, provided that little be what we can well spare, the Lord hath a great respect unto it. Learn lastly, That as we must give, so God will accept what is given, according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not. What is due to another, either by debt or duty, in making provision for those of our own family, cannot be charitably given, as being not our own.

13 For *I mean* not that other men be eased, and you burdened: 14 But by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may be a supply* for their want, that their abundance also may be *a supply* for your want, that there may be equality: 15 As it is written, *He that had gathered much* had nothing over: and he that *had gathered little* had no lack.

Observe here, The humble modesty and holy prudence of the apostle, in what he

demand of the Corinthians by way of charity for the poor saints in Judea. He tells them freely, he did not design to lay a load upon them to ease others, or to make others rich by making themselves poor; but that there might be an equality in supplying the wants of one another, that now you abound, you may supply them; and when they abound, they may supply you. Yet mark, we must not, by the equality mentioned here, understand it so, as if the wisdom of the divine providence had ordained *levelling*, or making all men equal in their portion of the good things of this life. But so far Christianity seems to require this equality, that we should not suffer others to lack the necessary comforts of this life, whilst we abound with them, and can spare them; and suffer them to sink in their sorrows, whilst we swim in fulness. Learn hence, There is a debt of mercy and pity, of charity and compassion, of relief and succour, due to human nature, and payable from one man to another; and such as deny to pay it the distressed in the time of their abundance, may justly expect it will be denied themselves in a time of want. To confirm this, the apostle draws an allusion from the gatherers of manna in the wilderness; some gathered more, and other less; but they that had more were to give them that had less. In like manner would Almighty God have it, that they which have great riches, should impart of their abundance to them that are in want; otherwise Almighty God will shrink their heap into some equality with them whom they refused to relieve. With what measure we mete, in acts of charity, as well as in acts of justice, it shall be measured to us again.

16 But thanks *be* to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you, 17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. 18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; 19 And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration of your ready mind.*

As if the apostle had said, I thank God that Titus was as forward to move you to this good work as myself; for he did not barely yield to it at my request, but of his own accord was ready to come to you about

it. And with him he sent Luke, a beloved brother, whose service for the gospel has made him honoured in all the churches, and who was chosen by the church to go with us in this diaconary service, namely, the ministrations of your charity to the glory of God, and evidencing the readiness of your mind to so good a work. Here note, 1. The holy apostle's constant custom and practice, to refer all good in us to God, as the author and producer of it; *Thanks be to God, that put this into the heart of Titus.* Note, 2. That a minister of the gospel, who declines being chargeable to his people himself, may yet put on confidence, and be bold and importunate in urging them to charity for the service and supply of others. Note, 3. That St. Paul's importunity for collecting this charity at Corinth, shows how much the case was altered since, at Jerusalem, *Acts iv.* they sold all, and laid it at the apostle's feet: and as that was not intended for a constant and universal practice, so we see, how quickly the love of Christians grew more cold. To procure this charity, St. Paul writes, Titus is sent, exhortation is given, arguments urged, and all due means used to accomplish this collection for the poor distressed Christians. Note, 4. That among Christians renowned for gifts and parts, costly duties come hardly off; else what needed this also? And yet it is not the cheap duties of religion, (such are prayer, hearing the word, and receiving sacraments,) but the costly duties of charity, that must evidence the truth of our faith and love; which are certainly dead, if barren and destitute of these fruits.

20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: 21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. 22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which *I have* in you.

Note here, The holy wisdom of this great apostle, in joining some other persons with himself, as Titus and Luke, &c. in the distribution of this charity; lest evil-minded men should suspect him of dishonesty, he takes care to cut off all occasion of suspicion, that he either kept any part of this large contribution to himself, or distributed it unfaithfully unto others; *Avoiding this, that no man should blame us.*

Note, 2. The reason also assigned by the apostle for this his prudential management; namely, because as a minister and a Christian he was obliged to provide and take care that all things be done blamelessly in the sight of men, as well as faithfully in the sight of God. The apostle by this his example, recommends to all ministers and private Christians a prudential foresight of such scandalous imputations as they may be exposed to by the world, let their sincerity in their actions be what it will; and lets us see how we ought to provide against them. Any one of these upright persons alone, either St. Paul alone, Titus alone, or St. Luke alone, were sufficient to be entrusted alone with the distribution of this charity; but the apostle did not know what a censorious world might say? and therefore to cut off all occasion, and to prevent all suspicion, he wisely appoints several persons to be witnesses of this action. If there be not in some cases overmuch caution, all is too little, and not enough.

23 Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ. 24 Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

Observe here, What pains the apostle takes to answer all cavils and objections that might hinder the free collection and regular distribution of this charity. Some might pretend, possibly, to say then, (as many amongst us do now,) "We know not into whose hands this charity-money may fall; we know not whether ever they shall be the better for it, for whom it was intended." Therefore, says St. Paul, if any make that objection, that they do not know Titus, and inquire after him, or his trustiness, tell them he is my coadjutor, my partner and fellow-helper in converting you to Christianity; and if the other two be inquired after, they are our brethren, the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ; that is, the instruments of his glory; therefore let these messengers see, and the churches which did deputate them, the proof of your love to me and to the saints, and that I did not boast of your liberality in vain. Note here, The high honour which St. Paul puts upon the ministers of the gospel, in calling them *the glory of Christ*, that is, the glory of the gospel of Christ, the glory of the Chris-

tian profession, the instruments of Christ's glory, by whom his honour and glory is greatly promoted; persons who by their exemplary gloriousness did bring much honour and glory to Christ. This title I conceive shows both our dignity and duty; our dignity, in that Christ accounts us his glory when we are found faithful to him; as the faithfulness of an ambassador redounds to the glory and honour of the prince that sends him. And it points out our duty, to promote the glory of Christ, to pray and endeavour that he would use us as instruments for the advancement of his glory; that as we glorify him on earth, he may glory in us, and be glorified by us, before his Father in heaven, and we be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. *Amen.*

CHAP. IX.

The argument of this is the same with that of the foregoing chapters; namely, to excite the Corinthians to a liberal and cheerful contribution towards the poor saints at Jerusalem, which were then under pressing necessities; and having laid several arguments before them to quicken them to the duty, he comes now to give directions concerning the right and acceptable performance of the duty, advising them to give liberally, because God had abundantly blessed and increased them; and cheerfully, because the Lord loveth a cheerful giver.

FOR as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: 2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

Observe here, The holy art and skill of this wise and great apostle, in promoting forward, and putting on these Corinthians to, this work of pious charity: he insinuates their present forwardness, to provoke them to farther forwardness; he tells them, it was superfluous for him to use farther arguments with them; for their forwardness was known unto him, and boasted of by him, to the Macedonians, that the Christians in Achaia (of which Corinth was the chief city) had made a proposal to supply the poor saints of Judea a year ago; and that their zeal therein had provoked very many to the like forwardness. It is very happy, when the ministers of Christ find their people forward and ready to every good work, to costly works of charity especially; yet it will be their wisdom, by commending their people for what they have done, to encourage them to do farther; not only for increasing their own

reward, but for provoking many to do the like: *I know the forwardness of your mind, and that your zeal hath provoked very many.*

3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: 4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. 5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up before-hand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

As confident and fully persuaded as the apostle was of the readiness and willingness of mind that was found in the Corinthians towards this charitable contribution, yet he judgeth it both expedient and necessary to send the brethren before to them, to get all things ready, the collection finished and over; that so when he himself, and the Macedonians, should come to Corinth, he might not be put to blush for them, having made great boasts of their charity, but finding no deeds: and also he desires their collection may be ready, with respect to themselves, that so their beneficence may appear to be their own free bounty, and not a collection difficultly extorted from them, as from covetous men, who give grudgingly and unwillingly. Note here, 1. That it is very lawful for the ministers of Christ to use an holy craft, and innocent guile, to draw men to a speedy compliance with their duty, sometimes by engaging their reputation in it, and sometimes alluring them by just praises to the doing of it. Thus our apostle did here. Note, 2. That the readiness which St. Paul here presses them to, is not the readiness of the mind, but the readiness of the action: he was well satisfied, that they were ready in their preparation of the mind long ago, but he presses them to finish the collection, of which he had so much boasted to the Macedonians. Note, 3. How the blessed apostle did consult the Corinthians' honour and reputation equally with his own, and was as desirous to prevent reflection upon them as upon himself: he would not have them ashamed, no more than himself, at his coming among them. Note, 4. That a liberal free-giving to the saints in distress, is called here *χαρις και ελεος*, *grace and blessing*: we translate it *bounty*. It is called

grace, because an heart to give liberally is wrought in us by the grace of God; the world shuts up our hearts till God opens them; and if the heart be open, the hands will not be shut: and works of charity are a blessing of God with our substance, and the way and means to produce his blessing upon our substance. Giving to distressed saints in proportion to what God has given us, is by Almighty God accounted a blessing of him, and a blessing of our fellow-brethren; and whoever thus blesses God shall be blessed by him. Note, 5. That the Corinthians being a very rich and wealthy people, the apostle stirs them up to an abundant charity. Where God gives much, he expects much: but how many, alas, grudge God a little of his own; and how difficultly is that little drawn from them, like drops of blood! Whereas to give alms purely to satisfy the importunity of others, or out of shame, misses of its reward before God.

6 But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, nor of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Here the apostle comes to direct the Corinthians how and after what manner they should give their alms, so as to secure a blessing, namely, deliberately. 1. *As he purposeth in his heart so let him give*, as he determined and resolved within himself. When a Christian gives, he must take care that it be his own act as much as he can. Some men give what they did never intend, and bestow what they did never choose or design to bestow. Importunity extorts charity from some; they give, to get rid of the noise, and purchase their quiet with their alms; whereas the liberal man devises liberal things, the good man lays by in store what he intends to bestow in alms. 2. Freely and bountifully; *For he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully*; that is, he that giveth liberally to the poor, shall be rewarded liberally by God; no wise man will pinch his ground of the seed. The proportion, or how much every one should give, cannot be determined, because that must be measured according to the ability of him that giveth, and according to the necessity of him that receiveth. 3. Cheerfully, *not grudgingly or of necessity; for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver*. In all thy gifts show a cheerful countenance, says the wise man; let us give with the same

cheerfulness that we should receive, and be as willing to give as the needy are to receive; nay, it is our duty to seek out objects, for some of Christ's members have as great modesty as they have necessity, and cannot speak for themselves. And let none think that this liberality will prejudice their estates; no, 'tis men's lusts that undo them, and not their charity.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: 9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

Here the apostle tacitly answers the common objection against liberal alms-giving; men are afraid they shall want themselves, what they give away to others. No, says the apostle, God is able to make all grace and mercy shown by you to abound the more towards you, that you, having a sufficiency of the comforts of this life, may abound in every good work of charity towards others. As if he had said, Be not afraid to give, nor sparing in giving; for hereby you make God your debtor, and you will find him an all-sufficient paymaster; he will repay you both in temporals and spirituals. Thou shalt receive silver for thy brass, gold for thy silver, grace for thy gold, a treasure in heaven for thy dross on earth: nay, your gold and silver will multiply here, as seed sown when scattered with a wise and prudent hand." The apostle here engages God's all-sufficiency for it; God will show his all-sufficiency, in giving you an all-sufficiency in all things; only we must remember, that we are to allow time; for Almighty God loves to be trusted upon his word: and those that will not give him credit, let them try if they can improve their estates better, or put them into safer hands.

10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness; 11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

Some look upon these words as a prayer, others as a promise, that as Almighty God blessed the increase of the earth so largely, that it sufficeth for the nourishment of men, and for seed to sow again; in like manner would he supply all their wants, and grant

them ability to supply the wants of others, and plentifully reward them for all the fruits of their righteousness and mercy; and they being thus enriched by the goodness of God, and exercising all bountifulness towards their brethren, much thanksgiving and praise upon that occasion is given unto God. In these last words is couched an argument farther to press the Corinthians to this liberality; namely, that it would cause both the ministers of Christ, dispensers of this charity, and also the poor saints, the receivers of it, to offer up incessant praises and thanksgivings to God for the same.

12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; 13 (While by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*;) 14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

Still our apostle proceeds, by way of motive, farther to excite and stir up the Corinthians to this charitable contribution, from sundry considerations; namely, 1st, That it would be a very reasonable supply to the church's wants, who were at this time in great want of it. Now the seasonableness of any mercy adds greatly to the worth and value, to the pleasure and sweetness, of it. 2dly, That it would occasion repeated praises and incessant thanksgivings to God, for many persons, and upon many accounts. 3dly, This distribution of yours, says the apostle, will be a convincing experiment, evidence, and demonstration, of your professed subjection to the gospel, and that your faith is not barren and ineffectual. No better evidence of our real subjection to the gospel of Christ, than a cheerful compliance, not with the cheap, but with the costly duties of Christianity. Lastly, For your alms, you will engage a stock of prayers going for you: this will procure, yea, provoke them to pray night and day for you; nay, not only engage prayer for you, but it will also draw forth their love and fervent affection towards you, make them very desirous of your acquaintance, having received such an experiment of the grace of God that is in you.

15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Here the apostle concludes his discourse upon this great argument with a doxology, praising and blessing God for putting it into their hearts in so liberal a manner to relieve the necessities of the saints, by which so much glory did redound to God, and so much honour to the Christian religion. This he calls not barely an admirable, but an *unspeakable*, gift; because a gift by which God was so much glorified, the gospel adorned, the poor saints so much comforted, and they themselves so plentifully rewarded: *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.* But if the Corinthians' charity was an unspeakable gift, what was the gift of Christ?—the gift of God to a lost world, to whom this title of *unspeakable* doth best agree: who is the author and finisher of all grace, and particularly of this noble grace of charity in the hearts of his people: for he sends his Holy Spirit, and pours into their hearts his most excellent grace of charity, the very bond of peace, and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before him. Eternal thanks then be to Christ for this admirable gift of charity, and thanks be to God for the unspeakable gift of Christ. *Amen.*

CHAP. X.

Our apostle having in the former chapters pleaded with the Corinthians on the behalf of the poor Christians in Judea, he comes in this chapter to plead for himself, and to vindicate his authority from the contempt cast upon it by the false apostles, who pretended to say, that when he was personally present, he was humble and mild; but when absent, severe and bold: thus unworthily interpreting his gentleness, condescension, and winning affability, to be no better than a fawning upon them for false ends. Wherefore he gives them, in this chapter, to understand, that he was well acquainted with their villifying reflections and calumnies, which were both unreasonable and unjust, and that he resented them as such.

NOW I Paul myself beseech you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence *am* base among you, but being absent *am* bold toward you: 2 But I beseech *you*, that I may not be bold when I *am* present with that confidence, where-with I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

Observe here, 1. The charge brought in unjustly against St. Paul by the false apostles; that when he was present with the Corinthians, he was low and humble enough, to some degree of baseness; but when absent, that then he writes like a lord to them, and exercises an authority with

pride and imperiousness over them. The greatest apostle, no more than the meanest minister of Jesus Christ, cannot expect protection from slander and false accusation. Observe, 2. The pious and prudent course which the apostle takes for his own necessary and just vindication; he beseeches them, by all that meekness and gentleness which, according to the command and example of Christ, he desired to express towards them, firmly to believe that he desired nothing more than not to be forced to use his power with that boldness towards them, which he feared he must use against the false apostles, who accused him of too much servility and meanness in his behaviour amongst them, and reproached his ministry as carnal and self-seeking.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh :

That is, "Although I yet dwell in the body, and consequently am not free from human infirmities and weakness; yet neither my ministry nor my life are from fleshly principles, by fleshly means, nor for fleshly ends." The best and holiest of men in this life walk in the flesh; they are clothed with a mortal body, but they do not *war after the flesh*, they do not fight under the banner of corrupt nature. Here note, The Christian life described; it is a *warfare*; *We war*. It is a life of vigorous opposition. The Christian has many enemies to conflict with, and to contend against, both outward and inward enemies: in a passive sense, he is a man of strife and contention; his hand is against many, and many hands against him. He doth manage a war for the flesh, but against the flesh; and in the next verse he tells us with what weapons he managed this war. ¶

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Observe here, 1. That as the life of every Christian is a continual warfare, so the ministers of the gospel are more eminently men of war; they fight against *principalities and powers*; and the devil draws up his full strength to pull down the office of his ministry, which is erected for the pulling down the strong holds of him and his kingdom. Observe, 2. The weapons which these spiritual warriors, the ministers of the gospel, do make use of in their conflict

and combat with sin and Satan: *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual.* They are not carnal or fleshly weapons that we use, neither fraud nor flattery, nor force; but spiritual armour, with which we batter the fortress of sin and Satan; namely, the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, the plain and persuasive preaching of the gospel, the Holy Spirit, miracles of all sorts, eminent wisdom and patience, exemplary zeal and courage in executing and inflicting the censures of the church upon the disobedient. Observe, 3. These weapons are called *mighty*, but mighty through God; that is, as quickened by the power and presence of God's Spirit. Then is our ministry mighty, when made mighty through God. The spirits of darkness cannot be conquered but by spiritual weapons. It is as impossible to make an impression with your finger upon a wall of brass, as for the best sermon in the world to make an effectual impression upon a sinner's will, without the co-operation and concurring assistance of the Holy Spirit: *The weapons of our warfare are spiritual, and mighty through God.* 'Tis the Spirit that gives them their success and efficacy: there is a real spiritual power and energetical presence of Christ in his own institutions and appointments. When the sword of his Spirit is taken into the hand of the Spirit, it works wonders. Observe, 4. The great and good execution which these spiritual weapons do effect and accomplish, when thus accompanied with the power of God: they are mighty to the *pulling down of strong holds*. By which some do understand a particular beloved lust; a special sin, by which Satan keeps and holds possession of the sinner's heart. Others understand it more generally of every thing that opposeth, resisteth, and hindereth, the success of the gospel; and particularly the stubborn will of the sinner, which is so strong an hold, that no power short of an almighty power can influence it to surrender: *Casting down imaginations*, or reasonings, and proud conceits; and particularly unbelief, in which sinners fortify themselves against the convictions of the word, disdaining to submit themselves to the abasing, humbling, and self-denying way of the gospel. But behold the glorious conquest which the gospel of Christ obtains over sinners thus fortified against it; *It casts down imaginations, and pulls down every strong hold.* Thus the ministry of the gospel spoils Satan of his armour in which he trusted, by showing the sinner that all this can be no defence to his soul against the wrath of God. Observe, 5. The improvement of the victory: the gospel

doth not only lead away these enemies spoiled, but brings them into captivity and obedience to itself. O happy and blessed conquest! Sinners do not only lay down their arms, and fight no more against Christ, but they repair to his camp, and fight for him with those reasonings of theirs which before were employed against him. O blessed victory, where the conqueror and conquered both triumph together!

6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

That is, having in a readiness that which will revenge all disobedience upon refractory and stubborn offenders, (namely, the power of excommunication,) and both authority and ability to inflict such corporal punishment as he judged fit, by delivering them unto Satan; which power he resolved to make use of, when the greater part of them were, by their obedience to his admonitions, reduced to good order again. Where note, That the apostle defers the excommunicating and censuring the offenders amongst them, they being very many, till he had, by exhortation and argument, brought over as many as possibly he could unto obedience. There is no place for severe remedies, when the diseases have taken and infected the whole church: the offenders in the church, when very many, cannot be easily punished; for when great multitudes are concerned, they are like to draw great multitudes after them. The apostle's practice in this case here, is a good pattern for our imitation, not to be too forward, rash, and hasty, in denouncing the censures of the church, but to proceed prudently and gradually; first using all fair means and gentle methods, and waiting with all patience for the reducing them to their duty who will be reduced, and then revenging the glory and honour of God only upon such as will by no means be reclaimed or reduced.

7 Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.

Because the false apostles had taught the Corinthians to despise St. Paul, upon the account of his mean appearance; he here expostulates with them, and desires to know whether they would judge of men by outward appearance, or by inward worth? As if he had said, "Are ye so weak as to judge of me by my outward person, by my bodily

presence, by the meanness of my garb, by the smallness of my stature, by my outward aspect and countenance? But if you will judge of me, and the pretended apostles, by ministerial gifts and authority received from Christ, surely I have as much to show of these as they can pretend to show; for in nothing was I behind the very chiefest apostles. There is no judging of men, much less of ministers, by outward appearances: much real worth sometimes lodges within, when nothing but what is despicable and contemptible appears without.

8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, (which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction,) I should not be ashamed:

As if the apostle had said, "I have not only an equal power and authority with those which despise me, (the false teachers,) but I have an authority and power which they cannot, dare not, will not, pretend unto; namely, the power to inflict corporal punishments upon obstinate and contumacious offenders, and delivering them up to Satan; which power if at any time I make use of it, it is for edification, not for destruction. This rod is not to be used rashly, but discreetly by me. Observe we, and learn from hence, an excellent rule, Never to handle the censures of the church (those edged tools) but with care and caution, with an intention to reform, not to ruin; to save, not to destroy: the church's power is for edification, not for destruction."

9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. 10 For his letters (say they) are weighty and powerful: but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. 11 Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *will we be* also in deed when we are present.

Our apostle here goes on, vindicating himself from the aspersions and reflections which the false teachers cast upon him. They told the Corinthians, that St. Paul's letters were indeed severe and authoritative, terrifying and affrighting: but his personal presence was weak, and his speech contemptible. Tradition tells us, that Paul (according to his name) was a man of a very little stature, and his voice answerably small; whence probably the false apostles took occasion to raise this report of his

presence and speech. St. Chrysostom says, that St. Paul's stature was low, his body crooked, his head bald; and when it is added, that *his speech was contemptible*, it cannot be understood as if it were so for want of eloquence, but it is thought this refers rather to some infirmity, or natural impediment, which the apostle might have in his speech. The gift of knowledge and learning, and the gift of utterance and elocution, as they are distinct in their nature, so they are separable in their subject, and do not always go together; a person of the profoundest knowledge is not always happy in elocution and utterance. However, in these false teachers we see the constant method and practice of impostors and seducers; namely, to asperse and lessen all that stand in their light: this is an old way of insinuating into the people. The false apostles feared they should never reign at Corinth, but by bringing St. Paul into disesteem with the Corinthians; therefore they say, *His letters are weighty, but his bodily presence weak*. But the apostle, ver. 11. gives them to understand that they should find him the same both absent and present; and that his deeds then should appear as awful as his words now; that when he came again, he would not spare, but punish all disobedience. Note here, That the thing which St. Paul would have his accusers fear, was that by the miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost given to him, to inflict corporal punishments upon disobedient persons, they should speed as Elymas did, *Acts* xiii. 8. who was smitten with blindness, &c.

12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise: 13 But we will not boast of things without *our measure*, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. 14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond *our measure*, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in *preaching the gospel of Christ*:

Observe here, 1. St. Paul's just charge, which he brings in against the false apostles, for their pride and vanity, in commending themselves, and comparing themselves with such as were like themselves: *They measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves amongst themselves, are not wise*. The reason why, many think

themselves wiser than they are, is, because they compare themselves with those that are below themselves, and not above them in understanding and knowledge. It is an excellent mean to keep us from pride, to consider how many are above us in knowledge; that there are thousands so much excelling us in understanding, that our knowledge is but ignorance, our strength but weakness, our faith but unbelief, our fruitfulness but barrenness, compared with theirs. Observe, 2. As the pride and vanity of the false apostles, so the great modesty and humility of St. Paul, the true apostle of Christ Jesus: *But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure which God hath distributed to us*. Where note, The apostle makes his apostleship or preaching of the gospel, to be as it were his spiritual exercise, or running a race, to which he here alludes; declaring that he kept his province, his stage, his compass of ground which God had marked out to him; beyond, or out of which line, whoever pretends to run, doth over-extend himself, and boast without his measure. Observe, 3. That the apostle's line or measure reached as far as Corinth, where Christ never had been preached; thither he came, and there he first planted the Christian faith amongst them; and he takes occasion from thence, to advance himself above the false apostles. 1. That he could show a commission to preach to the Corinthians; a measure by which God had distributed the Corinthians to him, as his proper province, which none of them could pretend unto. 2. That whereas they went out of the line, leaping from one church to another, he went on orderly in the conversion of the churches to the faith, from Judea, through all the interjacent provinces, till he came to Corinth. 3. That whereas they came to those churches where the gospel had been already preached, and so could only boast of things made ready to their hands, he preached the gospel where Christ was not named before.

15 Not boasting of things without *our measure*, that is, of other men's labour; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly. 16 To preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

Here the apostle tells the Corinthians, that he would not boast of other men's labours, nor pretend any title to those Christians at Corinth, nor any where else, whom

others had converted, as the false apostles did; notwithstanding he declares his hope, that when the gospel should have an eminent success amongst them, and thereby their faith be increased, that the increase of their faith would increase their joy and comfort, his present advantage and future reward; because it was the fruit and increase of the seed which he had himself sown amongst them. The apostle also doth farther declare his hopes that he should preach the gospel beyond Corinth, in the region of Achaia, where it had not been preached before; he being unwilling to enter upon other men's labours. Here note, That though ordinary ministers are fixed in particular places, and confined to particular churches, yet the apostles had a commission to go into all places, and preach the gospel over the whole world, and were tied to no certain place or people. Note farther, That the apostle seems to prefer an instrumentality in the work of conversion, before being instrumental in the work of edification. The false apostles could only pretend to build upon other men's foundations, and carry on a work by others made ready to their hands: but the apostle preferred preaching the gospel where Christ had never been heard of, as being unwilling to build upon another foundation, or to boast of another man's line. It is a special favour now vouchsafed by God to us his ministers, if he puts the honour upon us, to make us instruments in his hands either for conversion or edification, either for bringing home or building up a people. Happy we, if when our predecessors have laboured before us, we enter into their labours, and see the seed, which they sowed with a laborious hand, flourishing in the lives of our people, to the joy of our hearts. Ere long, both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together.

17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

These words are a seasonable exhortation to all the ministers of the gospel, 1. To take heed that they glory not in themselves, or in any services or performances of their own. As it is the highest act of grace to make our boast of God all the day long, so it is the highest act of corruption to make a boast of any thing that we either have or do, though but for a moment. Alas! what have we, that we have not received? or what do we, wherein we have not been divinely assisted? And if so, why should we glory? Verily, when man is most bent and set upon these gloryings, God delights to check him therein, and spit

upon his glorying; and so jealous is God of his glory, that he seldom suffers a proud minister, that assumes and arrogates to himself, to be either serviceable or successful in his work. 2. These words are an exhortation to all the ministers of the gospel, as not to glory in themselves, so to glory in the Lord; that is, 1. To glory in the work of the Lord, that we promote his kingdom, his honour, and interest, in the world. 2. To glory in the help of the Lord; the Lord is a master in covenant with us, and that a covenant of grace, in which every command hath a promise annexed to it, a promise both of assistance and acceptance. 3. To glory in the reward of the Lord, expected by us, and secured to us by purchase and promise: the private Christian's labours shall not be in vain in the Lord, much less his faithful ministers', who have borne the burden and heat of the day; let them then glory in the Lord, and not in themselves, seeing all the good that is in them and their actions, comes from him, and their recompence of reward is secured by him.

18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Three things are here observable, 1. The proneness which is in human nature to admire, applaud, and commend itself. Man is a proud piece of flesh; and a little apprehended excellency in himself presently puffs him up, and he looks big with conceit. 'Tis rare to see a man rich in gifts, and poor in spirit: poverty of spirit is better than all the riches of gifts, yea, it is the truest riches of grace. Observe, 2. Though a man is prone to commend and admire himself, yet self-commendation is no just praise, but rather a disparagement, a shameful indication both of pride and folly. He that commendeth himself, is not approved either of God or wise men. The same word, in Hebrew, signifies to praise ourselves, and to be foolish, because there is no greater evidence of folly than self-commendation; yet sometimes a wise man is forced to boast of his own performances, rather in a way of self-vindication, than by way of self-commendation. Observe, 3. That it is God's approbation, and not our own commendation, which is matter of true praise and real honour. When God and conscience bear witness to our sincerity, we need neither our own nor others' commendation; the open testimony of God, and the silent applause of our own conscience, is above all commendations whatsoever.

CHAP. XI.

Our apostle is forced in this chapter, for his own vindication, to enter upon a just and necessary commendation of himself; he gives us a large catalogue of his sufferings and services, not to grace himself, but to glorify God thereby; not that his person might be had in any undue admiration, but for the vindication of himself and his apostleship, from the contempt of those who preferred the false apostles before him. And accordingly, he bespeaks the Corinthians to bear with his seeming folly a little, in commending of himself after this unusual manner. Thus he addresses them, ver. 1.

WOULD to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. 2. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Observe here, 1. That which the apostle calls his folly, is his speaking so much in his own commendation and praise, because ordinarily self-commendation has a very great show of folly in it, though not always. As if he had said, "I would you could bear with me a little in that which looks like a foolish boasting in me, namely, my glorying in my performances, in my services and sufferings amongst you; and indeed you must bear with me herein." Where note, That although the apostle lay under a necessity to commend himself for the vindication of his office, which made him free from folly in this matter; yet because, generally speaking, self-commendation usually proceeds from folly and vanity, and such as did not know the necessity which lay upon St. Paul thus to speak, would be apt to impute folly to him for thus speaking; he therefore calls it folly himself first, and tells the Corinthians, they did and must bear with it. Observe, 2. The reason assigned, which constrained the apostle thus to do it; it was his holy jealousy for them. He had by preaching of the gospel, brought them to know and believe in Christ, and so, by converting them to the Christian faith, had espoused them to Christ; he entirely therefore desired, that he might present them a pure and chaste virgin, that is, a spotless church, unto Christ. As the Jews say, that Moses espoused Israel to God in mount Sinai, when he made them enter into covenant with him there; so says the apostle here, by converting you to the Christian faith, I have espoused you to one husband, even Christ.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his

subtily, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Our apostle having in the foregoing verses, with a rhetorical insinuation, begged their pardon and their patience, whilst by just and necessary commendation of himself he vindicated his person and office from contempt; and having shown, that what he did and said was the fruit and effect of a pious jealousy, or holy love mixed with fear; accordingly, he tells them very plainly in this verse, that he was really afraid of them, lest as Eve was seduced by the subtily of the devil, so their minds should be corrupted by false apostles, and seduced from the pure doctrine of the gospel. For as the noblest and most generous wine is adulterated by mingling it with water, so is the doctrine of the gospel corrupted, by mixing with either philosophical speculations, or Jewish traditions, or any sort of human inventions. Well, therefore, might the apostle say, *I fear lest your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

As if the apostle had said, "It is one Christ, one Spirit, one gospel, and not many, which we have preached, and you have received; now if your new teachers, the false apostles, have another Christ to set forth, more excellent gifts of the Spirit to boast of, another gospel to preach unto you, which I never preached amongst you, let them be heard and received." But this being impossible, they might well bear with him in his modest boasting and glorying in what he had done and suffered amongst them, by whose ministry they were at first converted to Christianity.

5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. 6 But, though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

Observe here, 1. The great modesty of the apostle in this expression, *I suppose I was not a whit behind the chiefest apostles.* He might have said he was equal with them, and in some sense superior to them, even

the most eminent of them, Peter, James, and John. Indeed the apostleship, as an office, was of equal honour in all the apostles; but even amongst them some had more excellent gifts and greater enlargements, and did more signal services than others. Thus one of those stars differed from another in brightness and glory. But observe, 2. Before whom it is that St. Paul thus compares himself with the chiefest apostles: it was not before the true, but the false apostles, that he makes this modest boast. He did not contend with any of the apostles of Christ for the upper hand, nor say, I am not behind any of you, or I am better than any of you; but he only gives check to those false apostles who undervalued him, and poured contempt upon him. He who said at another time, *I am not worthy to be called an apostle*, says here, *I am not behind the chiefest apostle*. From whence we learn, That the ministry of Christ may stand upon terms of credit with those that vilify their persons, disparage their function, and discredit that honourable work which God hath called them unto. Though all ambitious contending with others is odious, yet no man ought to betray either the truth of God or his own integrity, lest he should be counted contentions. He purchases the opinion of an humble and peaceable minister too dear, who either pays the faith of God for it, or his own credit; something of reputation being absolutely necessary in a minister, to render his labours successful. Observe, 3. The objection which the false apostles, those proud boasters of their eloquence, made against St. Paul, namely, that he was *rude in speech*. That the apostle had some imperfection in his speech or utterance, is the opinion of many. Others affirm that he was an eloquent preacher, from *Acts* xix. 12. Where he is compared to *Mercurius* for it; but he did not think fit, in his ministry, to use the Grecian flaunting way in ostentation thereof, that so the power of the gospel might not seem to be placed in human wisdom. "However, says the apostle, though *I be rude in speech yet not in knowledge*; if my language has nothing extraordinary in it, yet sure nothing can be objected against my skill in the mysteries of salvation. But I need not tell you of this, who have had the proof of it in my ministry amongst yourselves." Note we here, The manner and method of St. Paul's preaching: it was grave and serious, pious and ardent, plain and profitable. No doubt he could have acted the orator in the pulpit as well as most: but he chose rather to speak close and home to the consciences of men in a plain and

familiar style, delivering all his evangelical and apostolical precepts so plainly, that the weakest capacities might understand and receive them. Plain truths, without any art or varnish, may be conveyed with more warmth and vigour to the conscience, than all the charms of human eloquence from the most fluent and popular tongue.

7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? 8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. 9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. 11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. 12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. 13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Observe here, 1. That St. Paul, in his former epistle to the Corinthians, abundantly proved the lawfulness of his taking maintenance from those to whom he preached the gospel; yet here he tells the Corinthians, he preached freely to them, without putting them to any charge, though at the same time he had subsistence from the brethren in Macedonia. From whence learn, That one church ought to contribute towards the furtherance of the gospel in and amongst other churches. Here the brethren in Macedonia supplied the apostle with maintenance, whilst he preached to the church at Corinth. Observe, 2. The reason why St. Paul did preach the gospel without receiving any thing for the same

at Corinth; namely, to cut off occasion from the false apostles, who sought occasion to traduce and slander him, as a poor indigent fellow that preached for bread, and gloried that he preached freely. Where note, That it is very probable that these false apostles were some rich men, who took no pay of the churches for what they did; but preached, or rather deceived freely, and would have reproached the apostle as a mercenary preacher, had he taken any thing. From the whole learn, 1. That it is agreeable to the mind of Christ that the ministers and dispensers of his gospel should be maintained. A maintenance for the ministry, is certainly of divine right. Learn, 2. That the apostles themselves did not all work, at least not at all times, for their livelihood; but, generally speaking, did always receive maintenance from the churches. ver. 9. *I robbed other churches, taking wages of them.* We do not find the eleven apostles, after the Holy Ghost came upon them, wrought afterwards with their hands for their livelihood, but gave themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word, *Acts vi. 4.* Learn, 3. That though St. Paul did labour with his own hands at Corinth, and refused maintenance, for the reason fore-mentioned, yet his example doth not enjoin us to work for our subsistence with the labour of our hands, nor forbid us to take maintenance, when the churches we serve are able to maintain us. St. Paul tells us, when he wrought with his hands, he had then a power to leave working, *1 Cor. ix. 6.* He had a right to a maintenance from the church at Corinth, though upon prudential considerations he did forbear it, and no law of Christ restrained him from it. Learn, 3. That there have been persons all along, from the first planting and preaching of the gospel, who have sought occasion, and taken all occasion, though very unjustly, to charge the ministers of Christ with covetousness, worldly-mindedness, and with preaching for filthy lucre's sake. It was St. Paul's own case here; and therefore, says he, *will I glory in this*, that at Corinth, and all Achaia, I have preached freely, to cut off occasion from them that desire occasion, to charge me with covetousness and worldly-mindedness, which he would by no means give them an handle for. And thus it continues to this day: let a minister be never so laborious in his office, or inoffensive in his life, if he expect but a moderate part of what is his just due, there are those that will cheat him of one half of his right, and then charge him with covetousness for demanding the other. Observe, lastly,

The description and character here given by St. Paul of the false apostles: *They transform themselves into the apostles of Christ*; that is, they pretend themselves to be Christ's apostles, and act as if they were such indeed; they take up the doctrine of Christ in some things which the holy apostles taught, but it was that they might weaken the estimation of the true apostles in the hearts of the Corinthians, and set up themselves there. These false apostles were judaizing Christians, who mingled judaism with Christianity, and endeavoured to bring the Corinthians under the bondage of the ceremonial law. Behold here the first heresy with which the wisdom of God was pleased to exercise the church, even in the apostles' days, that no church, and no age of the church, might pass without some temptation and trial: *They transform themselves into the apostles of Christ, even as Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.* Then is Satan an angel of light, when he suggests good for evil ends, and under specious pretences of bringing glory to God, doth tempt persons to transgress the will of God. Thus the false apostles would preach error with as great zeal and industry as the apostles of Christ did preach truth; and use their utmost arguments, persuasions, and motives, for embracing of error, which the holy apostles did for the entertainment of truth, seeming to do the same things that the true ministers of Christ did. It is very possible for men to be really Satan's instruments, animated and taught by him to do his work, against the interest of Christ and his truth, and yet at the same time pretend to excel and go beyond Christ's faithful ministers, in preaching truth and holiness. So that the highest pretences to truth, orthodoxy, free grace, purity, and unity, are no sufficient evidence of a true ministry. Satan and his ministers, who love to transform themselves sometimes into angels of light, may pretend to all these, and are, notwithstanding, the sworn enemies of Christ and his kingdom.

16 I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. 17 That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

Here our apostle returns again to his own just and necessary vindication of himself; he acknowledges it unbecoming and unseemly in itself to boast much; and that boasting is the usual mark of a fool; but

it is no folly, when the interest of God and souls require it: it was only seemingly, and not really, his folly; though it had the appearance of folly in ostentation, yet with respect to the scope, the aim, and end, and design of it, it was needful and necessary. But yet he tells them, that what he had before spoke, and was now farther about to speak, *he spake not after the Lord*: that is, as if the Lord commanded any such boasting and glorying in ourselves, or of ourselves. He did not pretend to have any special command from God to enlarge so copiously in his own commendation; for the Spirit of God no where advises us to commend ourselves, or to glory either in the sufferings we have undergone, or the services we have done; yet what the apostle here said and did, though not after the Lord, yet it was not contrary to the Lord, or to the direction of his word, which no where commands us to conceal what grace God has wrought in us, or the good done by us, upon a fitting occasion, and with a sincere design that he, and not ourselves, may have the praise and glory of it.

18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. 19 For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. 20 For ye suffer if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. 21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

Here our apostle, with some kind of salt and smartness, reflects upon the Corinthians, (whom he ironically calls *wise men*), for suffering themselves to be imposed upon by their false teachers, to be tyrannized over, to be spunged upon and exhausted, to be brought again into bondage to Jewish ceremonies, to be *smitten on the face*, (that is, to be upbraided to their very faces,) because they had subjected themselves to so mean and weak a person as Paul, a tent-maker. However, he assures them, that in any thing according to the flesh, wherein the false apostles could glory, he could glory also. Here note, That by *glorying after the flesh*, is meant glorying in any external privileges and outward advantages, particularly in glorying that they were the seed of Abraham according to the flesh: for the Jews had a very high opinion of themselves as being the seed of Abraham, and the only people of God by visible

profession, at that time in the world; having contemptible thoughts of all others, whom they called "the profane," and "the people of the earth," likening them to *dogs*. Now the apostle tells the Corinthians plainly, That although there is nothing after the flesh which deserves greatly to be gloried in, yet, seeing that the false apostles did pride themselves in these things, he could boast of the same carnal privileges with them, and glory after the flesh as well as themselves: and accordingly thus he speaks in the following verses:

22 Are they Hebrews? [*speaking the Jewish language*] so am I. Are they Israelites? [*descended from the beloved Jacob*] so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? [*and not proselytes*] so am I. 23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, [*than any of them*], in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

That is, I have suffered more for Christ, by stripes, by imprisonments, by daily dying, than any of them have done. Here note, That these false teachers, the Judaizing doctors, were most certainly of the Jewish race; and that they were not only converted to, but did preach up the faith of Christ, but withal the necessity of circumcision, and the observation of the Jewish rites. These teachers went from Judea, and gave great disturbance to all Christian churches: as Corinth, Galatia, and Philippi. And we often find St. Paul complaining of them, by the name of *those of the circumcision*: because they required of such as did embrace Christianity, to submit to circumcision and the Jewish law.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

The law in *Deut. xxv. 3.* allowed forty stripes to be given to them that were worthy to be beaten, but forbade them to exceed that number: but it being their custom to beat them with a whip that had three cords, they must either stop at thirty-nine, or exceed and go to forty-two. Here observe, That the apostle, contending with these false teachers, proves the truth of his ministry and apostleship; not, as elsewhere, from the miracles and gifts of the holy Ghost, which did accompany his preaching, but from his sufferings, as being the things which these false apostles could not pretend unto, and so could not glory that they were like unto him in them.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 *In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren:* 27 *In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*

Behold what a catalogue the apostle here gives of his sufferings and services; he was scourged by the Jews with whips, beaten by the Gentiles with rods, stoned by the rabble, thrice suffered shipwreck, a night and a day tossed to and fro upon the sea, and in great danger of perishing; in journeyings often, from one country to another, to preach, plant, and propagate the gospel; in perils at sea and land, by pirates and robbers; in perils by his countrymen the Jews; in perils in the cities, Damascus, Ephesus, and Jerusalem; in perils in wildernesses and deserts; in perils amongst false brethren, men of the Christian profession: in weariness and painfulness, by travelling from place to place; in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, that is in necessitated hunger often, and in voluntary fastings frequent, for spiritual purposes; in cold and nakedness, that is, very poor, and thin in clothing. Lord! what tongue can utter, or what heart can conceive, the pains which the apostle took, or the hazards which he run, in preaching the gospel to a lost world! And yet the good man heartily thanks our Lord Jesus Christ for all that, who had counted him faithful, and put him into the ministry. Verily none of the ministers of Christ have any reason or cause to repent of the choice of their office, whatever services they undertake, or whatever sufferings or reproaches it either hath or may expose them to. Alas! what is all that we feel, to what this apostle underwent! And what is all that he underwent for Christ, compared with that transcendent reward which is in the hand of Christ, both for him and us!

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

The apostle's burden of outward troubles was discovered before: his burden of inward care is declared now. Besides those

things which were afflicting to him from without, the care and business of all the new-planted churches was daily upon his heart and hand; besides all his bodily labours by journeying and travelling incessantly from place to place, his solicitous care and thoughtfulness of mind for the prosperity and happiness of all the churches of Christ, both near and afar off, was great and pressing; the holy man felt as much by sympathy as he did by sense. Many were the personal troubles which he had felt, but more were the churches' troubles of which he had feeling; concerning which he thus expresses himself in the next verse:

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

That is, "What particular church, or what particular Christian in any of the churches of Christ, is weak in faith, or wavering in their profession? Where is the person that is assaulted with inward temptations, or outward troubles; and I do not sympathize with him, yea, burn with holy zeal and fervent desire for his settlement and establishing?" Sympathy among all the members, but especially in and among the ministers of Christ, is a great Christian duty; they ought to have a tender compassion to the whole flock, and also a quick sense both of the sins and the sufferings of every particular and individual member and part thereof. As Christ, our head, is afflicted in all his church's afflictions, so ought we, as his ministers and members, to be afflicted in the afflictions of our fellow-brethren. He that has no cross of his own, must take up and bear his brother's: yea, he that has many of his own, must yet bear a part of all his brethren's crosses. Good men ever have been and are men of tender and compassionate dispositions, ready to mourn over, and lament for, both the sins and sufferings of others, from the overflowing of a Christ-like spirit in them. True goodness evermore promotes compassion.

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

By *infirmities* here, we are to understand sufferings, reproaches, and disgraces, afflictions and persecutions, for the sake of the gospel. Where note, That the apostle chose rather to glory in what Christ had enabled him to *suffer*, than what he enabled him to *do* for him; he had wrought divers miracles, could speak divers tongues, had done very great and emi-

nent services for Christ; but not a word of these, because these indeed were evidences of the power of God in him, and of the favour of God towards him, but no demonstrations of any inherent grace or goodness in him; whereas his patient bearing of such sharp, long, and continual sufferings, for the sake of the gospel, were undeniable proofs of extraordinary measures of faith, and patience, of holy self-denial, and eminent love to God, and consequently were a truer and greater cause of boasting than extraordinary gifts and miraculous operations.

31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

Observe here, How the apostle, in a most awful and solemn manner, appeals to the all-knowing and heart-searching God, that the foregoing account of his sufferings for Christ and his gospel was the exact truth and no lie. He calls God to bear witness to the certainty of all that he had said of his sufferings and services; and calling him the *Father of our Lord Jesus*, who is *blessed for evermore*, affords an undeniable argument to prove the Godhead of Christ; this doxology, *blessed for evermore*, being a term of honour usually annexed by the Jews at the naming of God.

32 In Damascus, the governor under Aretas the king, kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: **33** And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

The apostle concludes this chapter, containing a relation of his sufferings, with a remarkable deliverance which God gave him from danger and death, at the city of Damascus, soon after his conversion, of which mention is made, *Acts ix. 24, 25*. The Jews, whom he confuted and confounded with his arguments at Damascus, sought to kill him; to effect which, they had by some means or other, brought over Aretas, who was king, under the Roman emperor, at Damascus, and he engages with the Jews in persecuting the holy and innocent apostle. He shuts up the gates of the city, keeps his soldiers in arms, and uses all possible means to prevent the apostle's escape. But what saith the Psalmist? *Psa. cxxvi. 1. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain; either to keep out those whom he will have in, or to keep in those whom he will have out.* All the wall shall be an open gate to

those whom Divine Providence will have to escape; as here to St. Paul, being let down over the wall by a rope in a basket. Neither was it any evidence of cowardice that the apostle now fled, nor in the least degree sinful; our Lord having given us a particular license in the case, saying, *When they persecute you in one city, fly to another.* Besides, the persecution now raised was directly levelled against the apostle in particular. It was therefore piously done in the disciples, and prudently done in himself, to attend the means of his own preservation. As the husbandman doth not commit all his corn to the oven, but saves some for seed; so doth God in persecution. All are not martyrs; and none shall be so presently: they must first finish their course of obedience before they finish their course with joy. Happy soul, that can say with this great and good man, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, I am ready to be offered up: henceforth is laid up for me a crown of glory, which fadeth not away.* Amen.

CHAP. XII.

The argument of this is much the same with that of the foregoing chapter, namely, the apostle's just and necessary vindication of himself, his person and ministry, from the aspersions of the false apostles, which were certain erroneous Judaizing teachers, who every where disturbed the church's peace, and gave the holy apostle great disquiet. In the former chapter he gloried in his infirmities, that is, in his sufferings, called infirmities: because the best of Christians are apt to betray much weakness, and to discover much passionate infirmity, in and under them. But in this chapter he comes to another kind of holy glorying, namely, in those extraordinary visions and revelations which he had from God. Concerning which he thus speaks:

IT is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

That is, "I acknowledge it neither decent nor advantageous, with respect to myself, to go on in farther boasting and glorying; but since it may be necessary with respect to you, I will declare what visions and revelations I have received from the Lord; in which I shall give such an evidence of the favours of Christ to me, and such a testimony of my mission from heaven, as none of these false apostles or deceitful workers can pretend unto." Learn hence, That although glorying or boasting in itself is so inexpedient a thing, savours of pride, and is an evidence of folly, when it is not necessary and just, and therefore all Christians should be backward to it: yet that which is so inexpedient in itself, may, upon a just and fitting occasion, be not only lawful, but laud-

able, both a necessary and commendable duty. Observe, 2. The present subject-matter of St. Paul's glorifying: it was heavenly raptures and visions which he gloried in. Learn thence, That divine revelations, acquainting the soul with heaven, are matters most worthy of humble and modest glorying. O! if God would vouchsafe to favour us with the sight of what St. Paul saw, what little things would crowns and sceptres, empires and kingdoms, seem to us! How would it make us long, groan, and cry, to be with Christ! But though none of us must expect such raptures and ecstasies as the apostle had, blessed be God for that clear revelation of this heavenly glory which the gospel gives, and for that assurance which faith gives, that Christ as our forerunner is entered into, and keeps his possession of it, in the name and stead of all believers. He has prepared it for us, and is daily preparing us for that, and in his own appointed time will put us into the actual possession of it; not for a few hours, (which was all the apostle enjoyed,) but for eternal ages.

2 I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth;) 4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Observe, 1. That the person here spoken of was doubtless himself, otherwise it had been no cause or ground of glorying to him at all: yet he speaks in the name of a third person. Thence note, That they who know most of God, are most modest when they come to speak of themselves. Observe, 2. The description of the person, *a man in Christ*; that is, a man actuated by the Spirit of Christ, above himself; and also a description of the place he was caught up into, *paradise*, the seat of the blessed. Learn thence, That there is a third heaven, or heavenly paradise, where are the concerns and hopes of holy souls; and souls are not so closely tied to the body, but they may, whenever God pleases, be wrapt up into paradise, or the third heaven. The apostle not being able to tell whether he was in the body or out of the body, sheweth that somehow the soul was there, though he could not declare or discover the manner how. Observe, 3.

What St. Paul heard when thus wrapt up into paradise, namely, *unspeakable words*, such as cannot be uttered; or, if uttered, cannot be understood. Learn thence, That the things of the heavenly paradise are to mortal man unspeakable: there is no human language that hath words fit to reveal that part of heavenly things which God hath shut up as secret from us. Observe lastly, Paul's great humility, both in concealing formerly this extraordinary favour, and now not without some difficulty and disguise mentioning it, though for defence of the gospel, in a manner constrained thereunto; contenting himself with such a fame as his deportment and outward actions, in serving the interest of Christ, could procure, and no way avoid.

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. 6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me *to be*, or *that* he heareth of me.

Here the apostle declares, that although this foretaste of the heavenly glory was worthy to be gloried in, and though he might boast of himself as thus exalted, yet he being purely passive in it, and advanced freely by God to it, he chose rather to ascribe unto God the entire glory of that, and content himself with glorying in such infirmities, and debasing sufferings, as he could strictly call his own, being undergone by him with an invincible courage and constancy of mind. However, he assures them, that if he had a mind to glory of this rapture and revelation, he might do it without folly or vanity, it being most certainly true; but he chose rather to forbear, lest he should thereby give occasion to any to overvalue him, and to think more highly of him than his common behaviour, his ordinary words and actions, gave them reason to do. A wise and good man is not ambitious of more applause and commendation than what his personal worth or merits deservedly challenge: he desires no man to think or speak of him above that which he appeareth to be, which is always as he really is, being that in reality which he is in appearance.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

Observe here, The great and special sin which St. Paul was in danger of, by the abundance of revelations, namely, the sin of spiritual pride. Learn hence, That heavenly revelations may be matter and occasion of unmeet and sinful exaltation. The holiest Christians, after their most heavenly acquaintance, are not out of danger of spiritual pride, or being too much exalted. Pride is such a sin as the holiest saint is not fully secured from; no, not when he hath been hearing unutterable words, and seeing the heavenly paradise itself; no, not if he came down from the third heaven, newly from converse with angels, yet bringing an imperfect nature with him, is he not out of danger of this sin, much less is he so when he cometh off his knees from prayer, &c. Observe, 2. The way and means which the wisdom of God made use of for preventing St. Paul's falling into this dangerous sin of spiritual pride, and that was, the giving him a thorn in the flesh: a bodily pain, say some; a bitter persecution, say others; something that was very afflictive to the flesh, say all. Learn hence, That spiritual pride is so dangerous a sin, that it is a mercy to be freed from it, even by bodily pain: God seeth our danger when we see not our own, and will hurt the body to save the soul of his dearest children. Oh, how much better is it that the body should smart, than that the soul should be over much exalted! It is an happy thorn in the flesh, which lets the pestilent and corrupt blood of spiritual pride out of the soul. Lord! why do we contend and quarrel with thee for every sickness, bodily pain, or afflictive cross! Can sin be prevented or killed at too dear a rate! Observe, 3. This thorn in the flesh is called *the messenger of Satan*; from whence St. Chrysostom concluded that it was to some evil angel that was permitted and empowered by God to scourge and buffet him. The sufferings of the best and holiest persons in the flesh may be the buffetings of a messenger of Satan, and yet be from God. Satan certainly intendeth our hurt, but God overrules him as an instrument to do us good: it is no proof that a man is not a child of God, because Satan has a permission to torment his flesh. The messenger of Satan was sent to buffet me, says St. Paul, lest I should be exalted.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

Note here, 1. The person prayed to, *the Lord*; that is, the Lord Jesus, as appears by the two next verses, that *the power of*

Christ may rest upon me. Here is an instance of prayer directed to Christ, therefore here is an instance of Christ's divinity: prayer made to Christ at all times, in all places, and for all things, is an evidence of his omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, and consequently of his being truly and essentially God. Note, 2. The subject-matter of this prayer; and that was, for the removal of the affliction, *I prayed that it might depart from me*; together with the reiterated frequency of it, *I besought the Lord thrice*. Learn hence, That peace with God doth not make the flesh insensible: a good man may groan under bodily pain, and lawfully pray for the removal of it; yea, be oft in prayer for it; earnest and frequent prayer is not unsuitable to sharp afflictions. *For this I besought the Lord thrice*. Where mark St. Paul's conformity to his Saviour, who in his agony prayed thrice that the cup might pass, but both of them with profound submission. Note also, That the apostles' gift of healing, was not to be used at their own pleasure, (then St. Paul might have healed himself,) but for the confirmation of the faith, when it pleased the Holy Spirit.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee:—

Observe, In this answer that is given to St. Paul's prayer, that the mercy prayed for is not in kind given in unto him, but promised grace and strength, which is better than the mercy he prayed for. Learn hence, That the frequent and earnest prayers of the most holy and eminent saints, for deliverance from outward troubles, may not be granted in the kind or thing desired. We are not lords, but beggars; and must leave it to God to determine the matter, the manner, the measure, the time, of our afflictions. Note farther, That as in the prayer, so in the answer, St. Paul was conformed to Christ; the one was heard, but not by the passing of the cup; the other was heard, but not by removing the thorn in the flesh; but both were heard by assurance and supply of divine strength, and sufficient grace to help in time of need. *He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee*. Learn hence, That the grace of Christ is sufficient for his people in all their afflictions; sufficient for their preservation, to keep them from falling away from God and godliness, by the temptation which always attends affliction; sufficient for their sustentation, to uphold and support them in and under their heaviest pressures and afflictions; and sufficient to render their afflictions truly advantageous and serviceable to them, to make them more

holy, humble, heavenly, conformed unto Christ, &c.

—For my strength is made perfect in weakness.—

This is not to be understood as if our weakness added any thing to God's power, or could make his power perfect; but our weakness renders God's power more illustrious, he delights, in and under our weakness, to manifest most of his helping power; as the stars never shine so gloriously as in the sharpest frosty night, so the power of God never appears so signally and conspicuously as in and under our weakness. Learn hence, That when God, upon our prayer, doth not deliver us from bodily sufferings, he will be sure to come in with sufficient grace, and manifest his strength in our pain and weakness. We never thought how much or how long we could bear and hold out, 'till God made manifest his own strength in our weakness. More of the power of grace is seen in the sufferings of believers, than ever was seen in their prosperity. Beg then, O Christian! more importunately for divine strength, than for the departing of the thorn: grace is better than ease or health; the one is proper to saints, the other is common to wicked men and brutes.

—Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Here our apostle tells the Corinthians, that most gladly he chose rather to glory in his afflictions and tribulations than in his visions and revelations, because by them he had greater experience of the power and presence of Christ with him, and of supporting him under all his pressures. Learn hence, 1. That the people of God are supported under, and carried through, all their sufferings and afflictions, by the power of Christ; a divine power above their own strength, like everlasting arms, is underneath them in the hour of trial. Learn, 2. That to glory in afflictions and tribulations is an high pitch of holiness and grace, but attainable. To glory in tribulation is, 1. To rejoice in it. 2. To express that joy outwardly, upon a fit occasion. 3. To express it with a great degree of exultation and boasting: many of the martyrs were so far from changing countenance at the stake, that they sung and triumphed in the midst of flames. *Quest.* But can any comfort be derived from this text for sinful infirmities? *Ans.* From the power of Christ, in this text, there may. Thus the powerful mediation and intercession of Christ is magnified in procuring

the acceptance of our persons and services, notwithstanding the sinful infirmities cleaving to them: also the power of his grace will at death be magnified, in purging and purifying his people from all their dross and dregs. There is nothing uneasy to a child of God, but there is something in Christ to alleviate it: affliction is uneasy, temptation uneasy, death uneasy, the wrath of God uneasy, the law, as condemning, is uneasy and displeasing; but Christ has delivered from the curse of the law, satisfied the justice of God, sanctified the cross, sweetened death! Oh, how adorable is the power, how desirable the grace of Christ!

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Observe here, 1. The high and heroic pitch which St. Paul's spirit was raised to: *He took pleasure in reproaches and persecutions.* Pleasure is a degree beyond joy; though these sufferings were painful to the flesh, yet were they pleasing to the spirit. A Christian may not love that which he bears, yet may he love to bear: to bear, is the patience of necessity; to love to bear, is the patience of virtue: to delight to bear reproach or persecution for Christ, is expressive of the highest affection towards Christ, and lowest subjection to him. If nature suffers not a saint to take pleasure in reproaches, as such, yet grace enables him to take pleasure in what he is reproached for. Observe, 2. The cause assigned why the apostle took such pleasure in his sufferings and abasements, because they gave him such experience of the power of Christ; inasmuch that when he was most weak in himself, he was then most strong in Him. *When I am weak, then am I strong;* which words are a divine paradox or riddle. The apostle affirms one contrary of another: weakness is contrary to strength; how then can a weak man be strong, when he is weak? The meaning is, That when a Christian is most sensible of his own weakness, and most diffident and distrustful of his own strength, then the power of Christ rests upon him, and he experiences divine strength coming in unto him. Christ fills none but the hungry, nor doth he strengthen any but the weak; only by going out of our strength, do we get strength; when in an humble sense of our weaknesses we rest upon Christ, the power of Christ rests upon us.

11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. 12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. 13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

Here again does our apostle excuse his boasting, and tells the Corinthians that they had compelled him to it, and ought to have saved him the labour of it, by defending him themselves. For he had done and suffered as much as any of the most eminent apostles, though he looked upon all as nothing: and consequently his services and sufferings, his miracles, signs, and wonders, were sufficient arguments, and undeniable demonstrations, that he was indeed an apostle of Jesus Christ. He farther adds, That the church at Corinth had as great and excellent gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon them, by his ministry, as any church whatsoever; all the difference was, that whatever was done for them was done freely: he spared their purses, and put them to no charge. Now, says he, if that be a wrong, I hope you can easily forgive it. Corinth was a very rich and wealthy city, but they loved a cheap gospel; the apostle spared their purses, not because they were unable, but unwilling to draw them. Here observe, That the people ought to give testimony to their minister's integrity, and do all that in them lies to support and maintain the honour of his ministry: *I ought*, says the apostle, *to be commended of you*. Observe farther, That when the people omit and neglect this necessary part of their duty towards their ministers, it is lawful, and not discommendable, for the ministers of Christ themselves, in a modest humble manner, to declare both what they have been, and what they have done. *In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing*. As if the apostle had said, "Verily, I am as much an apostle as they who think themselves more than apostles; though you and they through envy count me nothing, and though I in humility account myself nothing." Thus the ministers of Christ may stand upon terms of credit with any who lay their persons low, that they may disparage their work, and lay that service low to which God hath

called them. Though the ministers and members of Christ ought in lowliness to submit to one another, yet must they not submit to the pride or lusts of any, how high soever in their own or others' account.

14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. 15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

The apostle here acquaints the Corinthians, that he prepared himself a third time to come unto them, being providentially hindered twice before, yet with a firm resolution not to be any ways burdensome to them; for he coveted not their possessions, but was desirous of their salvation. And as a parent lays up for his children, and takes not from them; so he desired, as their spiritual father, to enrich them with spiritual good things, and not to take from them any of their temporal riches. Nay, he adds, that he was willing to spend and be spent; that is, to spend his time, his strength, his pains, his life, although he met with very undue returns from some of them, who loved him so little, because he loved them so much; showing more kindness to the false apostles, than to him their spiritual father. Behold here an imitable pattern of ministerial diligence and faithfulness, love and affectionateness: the apostle was willing to spend and be spent; not only his purse and pains, but time and strength, life and health. Oh, how tender are some of their carcass, how fearful of their skin, how sparing of their pains, for fear of shortening their days and hastening their end! Whereas the lamp of our lives can never burn out better than in lighting others to heaven: is it not better that our flesh consume with industry and usefulness, than wear out with rust and idleness? As it is the duty, so 'tis the disposition of the faithful ministers of Christ to spend and to be spent for souls.

16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile. 17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? 18 I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother: did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?

Here the apostle answers an objection, which without any just cause was made against him by some: it was suggested, "that though he was not burdensome to the Corinthians himself, nor took any thing of them for preaching the gospel, yet that he cunningly and craftily sent others to them, and set them at work to take money for him." Now, to wipe off this aspersion, the apostle appeals to themselves, whether any person he ever sent to them received any thing of them for his use! Neither Titus nor Luke made a gain of them, but with the same generosity and freedom preached the gospel, and communicated the riches of grace to their souls. When the ministers of the gospel at any time call in the assistance of others to help them in their work, their care is to employ such, as near as they can judge, who are of the same spirit, and walk in the same steps, with themselves. St. Paul, Titus, and Luke, all agree together in carrying on a generous design for the preaching the gospel to the Corinthians freely, and are of the same mind and practice in every thing.

19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but *we do* all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. 20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: 21 *And* lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness which they have committed.

As if the apostle had said, "Think not that for any sinister or by-ends of my own, I excuse myself so often to you, for deferring so long my promised and intended journey among you; for all I do is with an eye to your advantage. 'Tis your benefit and reformation I aim at; for verily I fear, whenever I come, I shall find those sins unrepented of, and unhumbled for, by many of you, which will be matter of humiliation, sorrow, and lamentation, to me; and that I must be necessitated, contrary to my inclinations and desires, to inflict censures and corporal punishments upon many among you, for the schisms, de-

bates, and strifes, of some; for the uncleanness, fornication, and lasciviousness, of others." Note here, 1. What great disorders and scandalous crimes were found in the church of Corinth, and yet she retained the denomination and character of a true church: the apostle fears, and not without cause, that he should find debates, envyings, wrath, and strifes, among them, the usual and necessary consequences of schisms and factions in the church. Note, 2. That notwithstanding all these corruptions and scandalous abuses, St. Paul neither separates himself, nor persuades any to separate from them. Nothing will justify a separation from a church, but that which makes a separation between God and that church, namely, heresy in doctrine, or idolatry in worship.

CHAP. XIII.

Our apostle being now come to the conclusion of this second epistle, lets the Corinthians know, that he had a third time resolved to come unto them, and to be sharp against such of them with his ecclesiastical censures, as he found unrepented and unreformed amongst them, sparing neither great nor small, one or other, if involved in the same guilt: which censures of the apostle were many times attended with corporal punishments, and sometimes with death: what the civil sword is in the commonwealth, that ecclesiastical discipline is in the church, when duly executed, namely, a revealer of all disobedience.

THIS is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. 2 I told you before, and foretold you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent, now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare: 3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. 4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

The apostle having throughout both his epistles blamed the Corinthians for several gross enormities found amongst them, and hearing there were some who had not repented of them, he gives them plainly to understand, that he had a full purpose to come unto them with his rod of ecclesiastical discipline and church censures, and would not spare a man of them, but execute that power on the impenitent, which

Christ had given him, by excluding such unclaimable offenders from church communion. Note here, With what wisdom and caution the holy apostle proceeds in the executing and inflicting the severe censures of the church; he uses admonition a first, a second, and third time, before he proceeds to the awful sentence of excommunication, *I told you before, I foretell you now, and being absent, I write to you, that when I come I will not spare.* He tells them farther, that they had tempted him heretofore, in that they had required a proof from him whether Christ had owned him as an apostle or not, and would ratify his censures by judgments following them. He shows that Christ had owned him, and manifested his power in his ministry among them, by converting many of them to the Christian faith, by bestowing the gifts of his Spirit upon them, and by many signs and miracles which he enabled him to do in the midst of them. When God calls his servants to the work of the ministry, he leaves not either himself or them without witness; he bears testimony to their sincerity, by giving them, in some degree, the seal of their ministry, in the conversion or edification of those they are sent unto: *Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, to you-ward he is not weak, but is mighty in and amongst you.* Next the holy apostle draws a parallel, and makes a comparison between his blessed Lord and Master and himself. As Christ in his state of humiliation appeared to be a weak and frail man, by being crucified; but was evidenced to be the great and mighty God, by his rising from the dead: so the apostle, considered in himself, and in respect of his afflictions, appears a weak and contemptible man; but yet they had found, and should farther find, a resemblance of the power and strength of Christ in his life and ministry; and particularly they should find him armed with authority from Christ to execute censures upon the contumacious and impenitent. Though the ministers of Christ, like their Master, when here on earth, are in a state of weakness, poverty, and contempt; yet they are clothed with divine power in the execution of their office, and their ministry is a living, powerful, and efficacious ministry, in the vigorous effects of it upon the hearts of their people; *We are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.*

5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Here the apostle advises the Corinthians, instead of inquiring after the proof of Christ in him, to examine whether they were in Christ themselves; intimating to us, that such are usually most backward to examine the state of their own souls, who are forward to inquire into the spiritual state and condition of others. "You seek a proof of Christ in me, says the apostle: O, rather prove and examine yourselves." Where note, 1. A duty expressed; *Examine yourselves; prove yourselves.* The word is a metaphor taken from goldsmiths, who with great exactness try their gold; the truth of it by the touchstone, the weight of it by the scale, and the purity of it by the fire. And the repetition of the command, *Examine yourselves; prove yourselves;* implies the great backwardness that is in men's natures to perform this duty, the great necessity of the duty, and the great diligence and frequency to be used in performing of the duty. Learn hence, That self-examination is an excellent, a necessary, and important duty, belonging to every one in the church, and requires great diligence and faithfulness in the performing of it. 'Tis necessary in regard of our comforts, and also in regard of our graces; for there are counterfeit graces, as well as real; and common graces, as well as saving; and 'tis a duty that requires diligence and frequency, because the work is difficult, because the heart is backward, because we are deceived, and willing to be deceived; because many have miscarried without it, and many perished by a negligent performance of it: *Therefore examine yourselves; prove yourselves.* Note, 2. The subject-matter of our examination: *whether ye be in the faith;* that is, whether ye be converted to the Christian faith, whether the faith of Christ be in you, whether the principle of faith be in your hearts, whether the power of faith be in your consciences, whether the practice of faith be in your lives, whether your faith be the parent and principle of obedience, working love, and working by love. Note, 3. The enforcement and motive to this duty: *Except ye be reprobates,* that is, counterfeit, adulterate, unsound, and insincere Christians, unaccepted of God, and not owned by him. As reprobate silver has no worth or fitness in it for trading; so such Christians as, upon examination, are not found to have the grace of faith in them, more precious than gold, are unapproved of God, and rejected by him. Note, 4. When the apostle expostulates with them, and says, *Know ye not your own selves?* it implies both the folly and unreasonableness of the neglect of the duty, and also the possibility and easiness of

knowing whether Christ be in us, or not, upon a due and diligent inquiry whether we have experienced the quickening and transforming power of Christ in our hearts and lives. Finally, So great is the benefit, and so sweet the comfort, which flows to us by examination and self-acquaintance, that it will abundantly recompense our care and diligence, in the frequent and faithful discharge of it.

6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

As if the apostle had said, "Whatever you, upon examination, shall be found to be, I trust you shall know, and be convinced, that we have not dishonoured Christ, nor shall be disowned of him. But whenever I come to you, you shall find that I am not destitute of the grace and power of Christ; whether for advancing your faith, improving your holiness, or correcting your miscarriages." The ministers of Christ, who are faithful to him, in contending with the errors and vices of men, in reproving sin, in censuring sin, shall be owned and approved of God, when the reprobate world shall be condemned by him: *I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.*

7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

The apostle drawing towards the conclusion of his epistle, shuts it up with prayer, earnestly imploring Almighty God, that the Corinthians might be found doing no evil, which might expose them to his censure, and force him to exercise his apostolical power, in punishing such offenders and offences as he should find among them. And he prayed thus for them, because he had rather have them good, than, by punishing their evil manner, have an occasion to testify himself an approved and faithful apostle. For he did not so much regard his own reputation, as their salvation.

8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

The apostle having prayed that the Corinthians might be found doing no evil, in the former verse, and assuring them thereupon, that they would then be secured from his censures and chastisements, he assigns a reason here for that assurance given them; because, says he, *We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth;*

having our power given us only for edification, and not for destruction. Considering the words without respect to the coherence. Observe, 1. A negative proposition, *We can do nothing against the truth.* O blessed impotency! 2. An affirmation, or positive assertion, *But for the truth.* O blessed ability! He was as strong as a giant for the truth, but as weak as an infant against it. Learn, That sincere Christians in general, and the ministers of Christ in particular, cannot, dare not, will not, do any thing against the truth, but for the truth. They cannot, that is, they may not, they are restrained by an outward command from God, who is truth itself. They cannot, that is, they will not, there is a restraint of an inward principle; neither the conviction of their understandings, the clearness of their judgments, nor the holiness of their hearts, will suffer them to oppose the truth. Again, they cannot attempt it; or, if they did, they can never effect it; they cannot do it safely, they cannot do it successfully. We can do nothing against the truth in a way of discouragement; nor nothing against it in a way of disparagement: but all our endeavours are for the truth; we embrace it in our judgments, we hide it in our hearts, and practise it in our lives. Whatever talent God entrusts any of his ministers with, whether of parts, power, or estate, it is an opportunity put into their hands of doing service for the truth, and, as such, to be accepted and improved.

9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong; and this also we wish, even your perfection.

The apostle may be understood two ways: We are glad *when we are weak*; that is, when I have no occasion to manifest my apostolical power, in censuring any of you as offenders. *But ye are strong*; strong in faith, and fruitful in good works. Or, 2. We are glad when we are weak, that is, when we are weakened by never so many sufferings and infirmities, provided you are made strong thereby: for this is what we principally wish and endeavour, even your utmost perfection in knowledge, faith, and holiness. Nothing is more desired by the zealous and faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, than to see their people strong in faith, fruitful in good works, persevering in well-doing, yea, perfect in holiness and obedience.—*This we wish*, nothing like it, *even your perfection.*

10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to

the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

As if the apostle had said, "Verily I write thus to you, being absent, purposely to reclaim you, lest being present I should be forced to use some sharpness towards you, according to the power which the Lord hath given me, tending to your edification always, and not at any time to your destruction." Observe here, With what tenderness the apostle treats these offenders: he tells them the sharpness and severity in his letters (if they accounted it such) was upon a kind design, to prevent sharpness and severity in his dealings with them, when he came amongst them; yet withal he assures them, that if matters should come to an extremity, that he must be forced to exercise his apostolical power, in cutting the contumacious off from the church's communion; he would exercise it with a tender regard to their good, not their hurt; for their edification, and not willingly to their destruction. Learn we, from the apostle's practice, to execute the censures of the church with great tenderness and affection, with great pity and compassion, with extraordinary dread and caution; not with rashness and indiscretion or upon every light and trivial occasion, but, like a tender-hearted father, with a rod in our hand, and tears in our eyes.

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Here our apostle shuts up his epistle with a pathetic option and affectionate wish of all perfection, consolation, concord, and communion, to his beloved Corinthians. Where note, 1. What a fervent and unfeigned love there is in all the faithful ministers of Christ, to the people committed to their charge, and how desirous they are, when they are taking their leave of them, to leave God with them: *The God of love and peace be with you.* Now God's being with a people, implies and imports these things; namely, the heart of God with them, the help of God with them, and the presence of God with them, and that they shall shortly be with God. Note, 2. What are the particular graces and blessings which the apostle wishes his beloved Corinthians: he doth not wish them earthly honours, worldly riches, sensual pleasures; but perfection of grace, spiritual consolation, mutual love, sweet communion with God, unanimity and concord amongst themselves. Sanctifying gifts and saving

graces are the best legacies that can be left by the ministers of God unto their people. *Be perfect*; be knit together; let the schisms and breaches which have been amongst you be healed. *Be of good comfort*, rejoice in and under all your sufferings for Christ, and the profession of his holy religion. *Be of one mind*, of the same judgment, if possible, in all things; or, if otherwise, let no difference in judgment cause disunion in affection; if in some lesser things your heads be different, yet let your hearts be one. *Live in peace*: for the Lord's sake live no longer in division and strife, in contention and wrath; let me hear no more of those debates, envyings, backbitings, whisperings, and swellings, which I have reprov'd you for: but especially live in peace with your teachers and spiritual guides; cause not them to complain to God of you, not to groan to God against you, for your factions preferring one minister before another; one crying, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos. Thus doing, *the God of peace and love be with you*; that is, he who is the author and enjoiner of love and peace will be with you, and dwell among you with his gracious and favourable presence.

12 Greet one another with an holy kiss. 13 All the saints salute you.

He exhorts them, according to the custom of those eastern countries, to salute one another with a kiss, as a token of mutual and sincere love: and since it was become a practice in sacred meetings and church assemblies, particularly before their receiving the holy communion, to kiss each other, he advises them to use it innocently, chastely; let it not be a wanton, but an holy kiss. However, afterwards the piety and purity of the church degenerating and declining, it was laid aside. That which is innocent in itself, and pious in its first intendment, may in time fall under such abuses as to cause it wholly to be laid aside.

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

Here are the highest blessings and benefits wished to, and prayed for, in behalf of the Corinthians, which they could possibly be made partakers of; namely, all that love which doth or can flow from the Father; all that grace which was purchased by the Son; and all that fellowship and communion with, and communication from, the Holy Spirit, which might render them meet for the service of Christ on earth, and

for the full fruition and final enjoyment of him in heaven. Observe here a full text for the holy Trinity: the names of the three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are here distinctly mentioned, as in the commission for, and in the form of, baptism, *Matt. xxviii. 19.* Here the apostle calls the Father God, the Son Lord, and the Spirit the Holy Ghost; and as he attributes love to the Father, grace to the Son, so fellowship to the Holy Ghost; therefore we have no reason to doubt of the personality of either or any of them. But when we consider how many at this day with impudence and impunity deny the divinity of

the second, and the personality of the third Person, in the blessed Trinity, we have reason to pray, as our church has taught us, for our own establishment, in the Collect for *Trinity Sunday*:

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity; We beseech thee that thou wouldst keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest One God, world without end. Amen.

THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
GALATIANS.

That this Epistle was written by St. Paul, whose name it bears, I think was never questioned; though it be not writ, as most of his other Epistles are, to the Christians of one particular city, but of the whole country, to wit, Galatia.

The Galatians very readily embraced the gospel, upon the preaching of St. Paul, and were at first exceedingly affectionate to his person, and zealous in the profession of what he taught. But, alas! soon after St. Paul had left them, some false apostles from Judea crept in amongst them, perverting some, and staggering others; teaching the necessity for such as had embraced the Christian religion to submit to circumcision, and the observation of the Mosaic institutions.

To countenance this insinuation of theirs, they alleged that St. Peter, James, and John, had sent them thither, and that they were of their minds in this matter; and, particularly, that St. Peter was against the rejecting of circumcision, and did himself practise the ceremonial law, and observe the rites of it in common conversation, separating himself from the Gentiles. Thus these judaizers opposed the doctrine and practice of St. Peter to that of St. Paul: and to carry on their design with greater success, they magnified the other apostle, and vilified St. Paul, not allowing him the name or right of an apostle, having not seen Christ in the flesh, as the rest had done; affirming that he never was called by Christ, nor ever owned for an apostle by the other apostles.

Hereupon St. Paul, in his absence from the Galatians, writes this epistle to them; in which, 1. He vindicates himself and his doctrine, proving that he was called to be an apostle by Christ himself, and that he had received his doctrine by immediate revelation from him; and that it was conformable to, and the very same with, what was preached by the other apostles. Next, he strenuously proves to them that circumcision and all the ceremonial rites were certainly abolished by the death of Christ. And lastly, He draws practical inferences from this doctrine, and instructs the duties of a holy life, exhorting them to live religiously in every relation; and so concludes his Epistle with a solemn protestation of his sincere affection to them; assuring them, that as an evidence thereof he had written the whole Epistle with his own hand, wishing them abundant consolation in Christ, both in life and death.

CHAP. I.

PAUL, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

The penman of this epistle is here described by his name, *Paul*; by his office, *an apostle*; and by his commission to that office, which was not human, but altogether divine, even from *God the Father by Jesus Christ*. Observe here, 1. The great modesty of this great apostle, in the setting forth his authority as an apostle: you will find in the front of his epistles, when he names any others in the salutation with himself, as Silvanus and Timotheus, he mentions not himself as an apostle, when named with them, lest he should be thought to magnify himself above them. But here, because his apostolical office was called in

question, he is necessitated to vindicate his authority, and accordingly declares himself *an apostle, not of men, nor by man*; that is, men were neither the authors nor chusers of him to his office. He was not called, as Matthias was, *Acts i.* by the suffrage of the rest of the apostles: he was not an apostle of men's election, nor by men's instruction; but appointed by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. Learn hence, That no sins before, nor yet after conversion, can hinder the rich mercy and free grace of God from using men in the highest employments in the church, if he pleases to make use of them. Paul, after he had been a blasphemer, was made an apostle; and Peter, after his conversion, denied Christ with oaths and curses; yet is a chief apostle, and an inspired penman of holy scripture. Observe, 2. The high dignity conferred upon St. Paul, with reference to his apo-

tolical office: he did not take it upon himself, but was chosen to it; he was not chosen to it for any merit in himself, but it was a grace freely bestowed upon him; and this not by the ministry and mediation of man, but by the immediate designation and election of Jesus Christ. Thus far he stands upon equal terms with the rest of the apostles: they did not call themselves, nor were they called by Christ, for any worthiness in themselves above others. But behold the peculiar prerogative of St. Paul above the rest of the apostles, in this particular: they were called by Christ in the day of his humiliation, when he was here upon earth in the flesh; but he was called by Christ after his resurrection, yea, in his highest state of exaltation, when sitting at his Father's right hand in heaven. And as his call was thus very extraordinary, so his gifts were answerable to his call. The gospel which he preached, he received by inward and immediate revelation, which made him so much excel all the other apostles; insomuch, that although in his own opinion he was the least of saints when here upon earth, yet in the opinion of others he was the holiest man when upon earth, and the highest now in heaven, next the man Jesus Christ.

2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia :

That is, "All the brethren which are here with me, and own the doctrine which I preach, send greeting unto the churches of Galatia." Here note, 1. How St. Paul's doctrine is justified from the charge of singularity, while the Judaizing false teachers objected against it. What he wrote and taught, he tells the Galatians, was owned by *all the brethren*. This shows the consent he had of the church with him, in that holy doctrine which was delivered by him. Note, 2. The generality of the persons to whom this epistle is directed; not to a single person, nor to a particular church, but unto all the churches in the province of Galatia. There were several Christian congregations, called churches, in that country, and all of them being leavened, or in danger of being soured, with Judaism, that is, of superadding the ceremonial law of Moses to the gospel of Christ; the apostle, and the brethren with him, direct this epistle, not to any single church in that province, but to them all in general, being equally concerned: *All the brethren with me, unto the churches of Galatia*. Note, 3. How the apostle doth not say here, as elsewhere, To the saints of God which are in Galatia; or, To them that are sanctified by God the Father; but barely says, *To the churches of*

Galatia: thereby declaring his holy indignation against the Galatians, as unworthy of those gracious appellations, because they had sadly corrupted the doctrine of the gospel; begun in the Spirit, and ended in the flesh; first owning Christ and the liberty of the gospel, and afterwards pleading for the bondage of the ceremonial law. Yet note, lastly, as corrupt as these churches of Galatia were, our apostle owns and acknowledges them to be true churches; they retained the essentials of Christianity, and were not guilty either of idolatry, or a total apostasy; therefore though stained with divers corruptions both in doctrine and manners, which he sharply rebukes and reproves them for, yet he doth not deny them the name of churches: *All the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia*.

3 Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

These words are both a Christian salutation and an apostolical benediction: as they are a salutation, they express a wish and desire of the best blessings towards and on the behalf of them they saluted. From whence we may learn, That religion doth not abolish and destroy, but spiritualize and improve civility, humanity, and common courtesy. The heathens wished health to their saluted friends; the Jews, peace; but the Christians, grace and peace. Again, the words may be understood as an apostolical and ministerial blessing: the apostles were the patriarchs of the church of the New Testament. And as a spiritual father, St. Paul here blesses his children, wishing them first grace, then peace. Peace must be sought after grace; and not expected before it. Peace without grace is no peace. There can be no peace with the Creator, no sanctified peace with the creatures, except through Jesus Christ we are first made partakers of the gracious love and favour of Almighty God. Accordingly says the apostle here, *Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ*. Where note, That grace and peace may be said to be from the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, these two ways: 1. Efficiently, as the authors and causes of both: God the Father is the author of all grace, as he did decree it; and Christ, as he did purchase it. 2. Objectively; that is, this grace and love in God the Father, and this peace and satisfaction that is in Jesus Christ, the more they are by faith apprehended by us, the more are they increased in us, and upon us. Learn, from the whole, That the holi-

est and best of Christians here on earth, stand in manifest need of fuller supplies and farther additions both of grace and peace to be daily communicated to them, and enjoyed by them: *Grace be to you, and peace.*

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father :

That is, "Our Lord Jesus Christ gave himself unto death, for the remission of our sins, that he might deliver us from this evil world; namely, to separate or bring us off from the evil customs and practices of the wicked men in the world, and engage us to live a life of strict holiness, according to the will and command of God our Father." Here note, 1. The priestly office of Christ declared and asserted: *He gave himself for our sins*; that is, an expiatory sacrifice for our sins. So dearly was the guilt of sin, so exact the justice of God, and so unalterable his faithfulness, in executing the judgment which was denounced against sinners, that there was no hope for guilty sinners' pardon, without satisfaction given to the injured justice of God for sin; and nothing less would satisfy than the blood of God, that is, the blood of Jesus Christ, who is essentially, truly, and really God. Note, 2. A farther end and design which God had in giving himself for us; namely, to deliver from the rage of our lusts, as well as from the wrath of God; to sanctify our natures for us, and to mortify our corruptions in us; to redeem us from our vain conversation, and deliver us from this present evil world; not totally to remove us out of the world, but morally to oblige us to abandon the wicked courses, the sinful practices, of the evil men of the world. Blessed be God, that Jesus Christ did not only purchase pardon and remission, but holiness and sanctification also, for his ransomed and redeemed ones, and is as willing to free us from the dominion, as from the danger, of our sins; *He gave himself for us, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.* Note 3. As the final cause of Christ's death, deliverance from God's wrath, and sin's rage; so the efficient cause of his death, the will of his Father. *He gave himself for us, according to the will of God*; that is, according to the purpose and appointment of God. Christ, as Mediator, was the Father's servant; and whatever he did in the work of mediation for us, was by the appointment, and with the special approbation, of God the Father. Eternal thanks be given, that the Son's purchase was the Father's pleasure. Note, 4. The

comfortable relation in which God now stands unto us, since Christ gave himself for us, namely, that of a Father: *According to the will of God and our Father*: that is, who is now our Father. Learn hence, That satisfaction being given by Christ to provoked justice for our sins, God, who was before a consuming fire, and a sin-punishing judge, is become our gracious and reconciled Father; our Father by adoption, who before was our Father only by creation: *According to the will of God and our Father.*

5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

That is, "To God the Father and Christ Jesus our Redeemer, be given the highest degrees of honour and glory, throughout the present and eternal ages. Note here, 1. The work and duty incumbent upon Christ's redeemed ones, and that is, to ascribe all honour and homage, all glory and praise, to God the Father as the contriver, and to Christ the Son as the accomplisher, of the work of redemption: *To whom, both whom, be glory.* Note, 2. The duration and continuance of this duty; not for a day, or year, but for eternal ages. This duty of ascribing honour and homage, glory and praise, to the Father and Mediator, for the glorious work of man's redemption, is such, that it can never be sufficiently discharged, but requires a succession of ages to perform it in; yea eternity itself is too short for the performance of it. *To whom be glory for ever and ever.* The glory of the Redeemer, and of Him that sent him to redeem, will be the long-lasting and never-ending song of the redeemed ones, through millions of ages, yea, to all eternity; a work begun on earth, never finished in heaven.

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Observe here, 1. The heavy charge which St. Paul brings in against the false apostles or judaizing teachers: they perverted the gospel which St. Paul had preached, and taught a new gospel of their own; yet not absolutely so, but by compounding and mingling the gospel with the ceremonial law, and by making circumcision and other things necessary to salvation, which our Saviour never made so; this the apostle calls *another gospel*. Whence learn, 1. That it is no new or strange thing to hear of new gospels, of true gospel perverters, and

of false gospel teachers. We find such in the primitive and purest churches, planted even by the apostles themselves; no wonder they are found in our days, who are fallen into the very dregs of time and error together. Learn, 2. That the addition of any thing to the Christian religion, as necessary to be believed and practised in order to salvation, is a perverting the gospel of Christ, and preaching another gospel. These Galatians did not renounce Christianity, and go over to another religion, but they received circumcision, and the observation of the law of Moses, as an essential part of the Christian religion, and as a condition of eternal salvation; whereas the death of Christ having put an end to the Jewish dispensation, there was neither then nor now any obligation upon Christians to observe the law of Moses: and consequently the addition of any thing to the Christian doctrine, as necessary to be believed and practised in order to salvation, is preaching another gospel, and a manifest perverting of the gospel of Christ. Learn, 3. That there is no authority in the Christian church, in any or in all the guides of it, to impose upon Christians any thing, as of necessity to salvation, which the gospel has not made necessary. The apostles themselves had no authority to add any thing to the gospel, much less can any that come after them pretend to it: Christ commands them, *Matt. xxviii.* to teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever he commanded them; and had the apostles themselves added any point of faith and practice not given them in charge by Christ himself, they had fallen under that curse themselves, which here they denounced against false teachers. Observe, 2. The artifice which these false teachers used, to draw the Galatians into these new errors; and that was hastily and suddenly to avow and own them before the world: I marvel that ye are *so soon* removed. Seducers are for clapping up an hasty match between the mind and error, and press the seduced to quick resolutions; an hasty despatch being their great advantage, before they consult their spiritual guides, or weigh matters in the balance of impartial judgments. What, says the apostle, are ye *so soon* removed! Yes, might the false teachers have said, if not so soon, it might never; if not so soon removed, they might never be at all: for errors are like fish, they must be eaten fresh and new, or they'll quickly stink, and be thrown away. Observe, 3. The true course from which the Galatians' fall into error did proceed: they trusted themselves with themselves; they trusted to the clearness of

their own unassisted eyes, and to the strength of their own reason and judgment, without consulting their spiritual guide. Had not these Galatians a Paul to consult with, before they gave their consent to false teachers? Or if he was at a distance from them, about the work of the Lord in remote places, could not they have written to him, or advised with others besides him? Woe to him that is alone, when assailed by seducers!

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, if any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle supposes an impossibility, only for the confirmation of what he had before affirmed. He doth not suppose it possible for any angel in heaven, or apostle upon earth, to contradict the doctrine of the gospel which he had delivered, to preach any thing contrary to it, or besides it, or different from it; making that necessary to be believed and practised which Christ and his apostles never made necessary. Learn hence, That the written word of God, without unwritten traditions, contains in it all things necessary to salvation; and whatever doctrines are propounded to the church, not only contrary to, but differing from it, or besides the written word, are cursed doctrines. Observe, 2. The terrible anathema which the apostle denounces against those, whoever they should be, be it an apostle upon earth, or an angel from heaven, that should thus pervert the gospel of Christ, by making any thing necessary to be believed or practised in order to salvation, which Christ has not made necessary: *Let him be accursed.* Let the church of Rome in general, and the council of Trent in particular, dread the efficacy of this curse, who have added so many new articles to the Christian faith, and enforced them as necessary to be believed by all Christians; insomuch that they pronounce, "that no salvation can be obtained without the belief of them," and denounce their anathemas against us who cannot believe them. But as their curse causeless shall not come, so we believe that they, propounding terms of salvation no where delivered by Christ and his apostles, do bring themselves under the apostle's anathema here in this text: for if the new articles of the church of Rome be necessary to salvation, then what Christ

and his apostles delivered was not sufficient to salvation before; and thus the pride of man exalts itself above the wisdom of God. Observe, 8. How the apostle expresses his assurance in this matter; and to show that he did not speak rashly, and in a heat, but upon due consideration, he repeats again, ver. 9. *As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach otherwise, let him be accursed.* Note here, How positive and peremptory the apostle is in this matter. And doubtless this one anathema of his is more dreadful than all the *Bruta fulmina*, the freakish anathemas, of an enthusiastic church, which, in a manifest affront to the authority of St. Paul, has presumed to add so many new articles to the Christian religion, for which there is not the least ground or warrant, either from the holy scriptures, or any of the ancient creeds. Observe, lastly, How the apostle puts himself into the number: *if I, or any man, or any angel, preach otherwise, let him be accursed.* As if the apostle had said, "Not only the false apostles are to be rejected, but I myself deserve to be anathematized, and accounted an execrable person, should I preach any other doctrine to you, than what you have received from Christ by me; nay, should any angel from heaven attempt it, he ought to be detested for it." Learn, That no angel in heaven, no person or church upon earth, have power to make new articles of faith, or to impose any thing upon our belief or practice, that is either against or besides the written word, or any ways inconsistent with it, or contrary unto it.

10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Our apostle in these words discovers the great sincerity he used in preaching the pure and unmixed doctrine of the gospel to the Galatians; for he did not persuade that men, but God, should be heard and obeyed, that so their faith might be founded upon divine, and not human, authority; nor did he in his ministry aim at pleasing men, but Christ. For should he now please men, being an apostle, as he did in times past, being a *Pharisee*, he should not be the servant of Christ. The ministers of Christ must not be men-pleasers: they must not please men either by flattery or falsehood, nor accommodate their doctrines to the humours and dispositions of men; pleasing of God is our great work and business, let us mind that: man-pleasing is endless and needless, any farther than for their good, and the gospel's gain. Accordingly the

apostle tells us elsewhere, that he was made all things to all men, that he might gain some; not to make a present gain of them, but that they might be eternal gainers by him; it was not to exalt himself, but that Christ might be exalted in the hearts and lives of his hearers, that he sought in and by his ministry to please all men; and thus, in imitation of him, let us seek to please all men for their good to edification.

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The apostle here, as he did before, verses 1, 2, asserts the divinity of the doctrine of the gospel which he had preached to them; and assures them likewise of his own lawful call to be an apostle, which was questioned by his adversaries, who affirmed that he had received his doctrine only from others to the second hand. To satisfy them in the divinity of his doctrine, he tells them, it was not after man; that is, it was not human, but divine; nothing belonging to man, but all from God in it; and as for his authority to preach it, he assures them he had a revelation and commission from Jesus Christ so to do; he learned not his doctrine from any human teacher, nor undertook to preach it by any human authority, but from Christ's immediate revelation. Learn hence, It is a singular satisfaction to the ministers of Christ, and that which gives them boldness before their false accusers, when they can give good proof of their regular call to the work of the ministry, and of the divinity of the doctrine dispensed by them. Thus did St. Paul here: the gospel, says he, which I preach to you, and the mission I had so to preach it, was not after man, nor from man, nor by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Where note, From Christ's being so often opposed to man in these verses, and in the first verse, that he is not mere man, but God as well as man; why else doth the apostle oppose Christ to man so often as he doth here? Not of man, neither by man, nor after man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ, who is God.

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it; 14 And profited in the

Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Here the apostle offers several arguments to satisfy the Galatians, that both his commission to preach the gospel, and also the gospel which he preached to them, were not from man, but our Lord Jesus Christ. And the first argument to prove it, as a convictive evidence of it, was his bitter enmity against the Christian religion, and his mighty zeal for the Jewish religion, in which he was educated and brought up: all which he mentions as a thing publicly known, leaving them to infer from thence, that so great and sudden a change could not be the effect of human persuasion, but by divine revelation. *In times past I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.* Where note, that although our apostle did not shun to make an open confession of his wicked life before his conversion, that he might thereby make evident that his conversion was immediately from God; yet he makes an open confession only of his open sins, such as they had heard of in time past, without discovering his secret sins, which had been kept from the knowledge of the world, the divulging whereof would but have multiplied scandals and stumbling-blocks unto others. To confess our secret sins to God, is safe; to confess our open sins to the world, is sufficient. Observe farther, The commendable proficiency which St. Paul made in the Jewish religion, wherein he was instructed and educated: *I profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals.* He was also a zealous maintainer of the Jewish customs, and unwritten traditions, *being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.* From St. Paul's example we may infer, That it is a special duty incumbent upon all persons to make religion the matter of their choice; and having espoused it, to be the more serious and zealous in it; to labour to advance and grow both in the knowledge and in the practice of it; and that to a degree of eminency excelling and outstripping others: *I profited in the Jewish religion above many my equals, or contemporaries.*

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17. Neither went I up to

Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Here we have a second evidence, which St. Paul brings to prove himself an apostle extraordinary, called by God himself unto the ministerial service; and that the doctrine he delivered was not mediately, from the mouths of the apostles, but by immediate revelation from Jesus Christ. Thus he speaks; "When," says he, "it pleased God, who decreed and determined to separate and set me apart for the work of an apostle, even from my very infancy, and afterwards of his mere grace and good-will called me to preach the gospel to the Gentile world, having first revealed his Son in me, and to me, and then by me, immediately I set about the work, and complied with my duty, not consulting any person living, neither my own carnal reason, nor any man's advice; neither went I up presently to Jerusalem to confer with, to receive authority or instruction from, them which were apostles before me, but I went immediately from Damascus, the place of my conversion, into Arabia, and preached the gospel three years among those wild and barbarous heathens, and then returned again unto Damascus: from whence it evidently appears, that I neither had instruction nor commission from any of the apostles that were before me, having never seen any of them as yet, but both my mission and my message were immediately received from Jesus Christ. Here observe, 1. The qualification necessary in a minister that reveals Jesus Christ unto his people, namely, that Christ must be revealed to him, and in him. We must learn Christ ourselves, before we pretend to preach him to others; *When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me, I preached him among the heathen.* As there is no knowledge like the knowledge of experience; so there is no preaching like experimental preaching. Happy those that can say, Not only that which we have heard and read, but that which we have tasted, and felt, and experienced from the Holy Spirit's operation in and upon our own hearts, that declare we unto you. Observe, 2. What haste the apostle made to obey the call and command of God, after he had received it: *Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.* He consulted neither himself nor others, neither his own heart, nor the wisest heads; he consulted not his own safety nor carnal interest, but instantly did what he was commanded to do. The great commendation of duties, is the ready discharge of

duties. When once the mind of God is declared, and conscience thoroughly satisfied, we cannot be too quick and expeditious in the execution of divine commands. Lord! how readily should all men, but especially thy ministers, answer and obey thy call, and execute thy will and pleasure! *Immediately I conferred not*, says St. Paul: *I made haste and delayed not*, says holy David. In a good work it is good to make haste: in God's work we cannot readily make more haste than good speed.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

Here is a third evidence to prove that St. Paul received his ministry and message by divine revelation from Jesus Christ, and not from man, or by man. He acknowledges, that not till three years after his conversion, when he had preached the gospel in the deserts of Arabia, had he ever seen Peter, or any other of the apostles, and consequently could not receive the knowledge of the gospel from him or them, as his adversaries the false apostles would insinuate and suggest. True, after his three years' preaching in, and in his return from Arabia, he went up to Jerusalem, and saw Peter and James, and conversed with them for fifteen days. But the shortness of his stay with them is an evidence that he went not up to Jerusalem to learn the gospel from them, much less to pay homage to St. Peter as the prince of the apostles: for St. Paul often affirms, in his epistles, That he was not inferior to St. Peter, nor came behind the chiefest of the apostles; but it was only a familiar and friendly visit, given by one minister of Christ to another, in token of mutual consent and agreement in the same truth preached by both; and by no means to receive ordination from Peter, or divine instructions, (for he had an higher teacher than him, even Christ himself,) or to acknowledge any subjection to him, by owning his supremacy over all the apostles; as the church of Rome would bear us in hand he did, in defiance of what St. Paul himself declares to the contrary. But we cannot help it, if men who have their credulity at their own dispose, and can believe what they list, will yield their assent to what is contrary to divine revelation, and the reason of things. Very evident it is to an impartial observer, that St. Paul's visit at Jerusalem was a visit of civil courtesy, yet for the spiritual consolation and mutual edification both of himself and

the apostles, whom he thus visited. From hence learn, 1. That the ministers of Christ should be so far from living at variance with, or at any distance in affection from, each other, that they ought to maintain correspondency and familiarity with one another, and to give friendly visits to each other, in token of their harmony and mutual agreement in the same divine truths delivered by them. Thus did our apostle here: he took a journey to Jerusalem to see Peter, and James our Lord's kinsman. Learn, 2. From the shortness of his visit and stay at Jerusalem, though it was in the most delightful and desirable, yea, most profitable company, yet it was but for *fifteen days*: he hastens away to his charge again. Thence note, That though the ministers of Christ may and ought to visit each other, as an evidence of reciprocal affection, and in order to mutual direction, edification, and consolation; yet ought their meetings to be neither so frequent, nor of so long continuance, that thereby their several flocks shall suffer prejudice. After a short time spent in visiting, we must return to our business, and mind, above all things, our ministerial charge: *I went to see Peter, but abode with him only fifteen days*.

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

Observe here, That St. Paul, having to do with the false apostles and the seduced Galatians, who, he had just cause to suspect, would not (as they ought) give much credit to his word; he asserts the truth of what he affirmed upon oath, appealing to the all-knowing and heart-searching God, as witness and judge of the truth of what he said. *Behold, before God, I lie not*. Where note, 1. That it is no new thing for the faithfullest and ablest ministers and servants of Christ to be looked upon as liars, unworthy to be trusted, and to have the truth of what they delivered, though in God's name, questioned and suspected. Our apostle's purging of himself here from lying, doth import, that some did suspect him for a liar. And if an inspired apostle be, what private minister may not be, suspected? Note, 2. The mean which St. Paul makes use of for purging himself from the imputation of falsehood: it was by taking an oath in a solemn manner. Learn thence, That though rash swearing, false swearing, and upon every light occasion to take or multiply oaths, be a very great sin; yet to swear, and bear witness to the truth, and to take an oath upon due consideration, and for weighty reasons, and

to swear by the name of God, is certainly a lawful duty, and sometimes a very necessary and important duty.

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea, which were in Christ: 23 But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24 And they glorified God in me.

The fourth evidence is here produced by St. Paul, to prove, that both his ministry and his message, his office and his doctrine, were divine; and that he was so far from learning the Christian religion from the Christian churches in Judea, that he was not by face so much as known to them, or they to him: they had heard, indeed, that one Paul a persecutor was become a preacher, but they had never seen him: and accordingly they magnified the grace of God in his conversion, admiring the wonderful change wrought in him. Observe here, 1. The laborious diligence and indefatigable industry of St. Paul, in planting and propagating the Christian faith throughout the world: he travels as soon as converted into Arabia, then into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, thinking he could never do service enough for Christ, who had suffered and done so much for him. Oh how full of life and zeal are young converts! What activity and industry for Christ and souls is found with them! They despise all danger, they surmount all difficulties, are above all discouragements, in expressing their love to Christ, and venturing their lives for him. But alas, as they grow older, their affections are cooler, so that they have many times just cause to say, *Oh that it were with me as in the month of old, in the day when God converted me, when the secret of God was with me, and when by his light I walked through all difficulties, to subserve his interest, and to promote his glory.* Observe, 2. The great and mighty power of the heart-changing grace of God, which turns the haters and professed enemies of religion into friends, and bitter and bloody persecutors into bold and painful preachers of the gospel: *He who persecuted in times past, now preached the faith which once he destroyed.* He that leads captivity captive, can soon make the stoutest enemies of religion to become its strongest friends. Observe, 3. Paul before his conversion, is said to *destroy the faith*, because he intended it, and endeavoured it, though he could not actually effect it, and accom-

plish it. Sin and evil intended by a determined resolution, are as good as acted, in God's account. Bloody persecutors design no less than a total extirpation of the truth, *to destroy the faith*; which though it be out of their reach to effect, yet having deliberately resolved it, it is as actually accomplished in the account of God: *He now preacheth the faith that once he destroyed.* Observe, lastly, to whom the glory and praise of converting grace is due; namely, to God, and God alone. *They glorified God in me*; that is, they owned and admired the grace of God bestowed upon me, which wrought such a glorious and blessed change in me. The converting grace of God, wrought either in ourselves or others, is matter of admiration, and calls for thanksgivings and acknowledgments unto God: *They glorified God in me.*

CHAP. II.

Our apostle prosecutes, in this, the argument which he had begun in the former chapter, namely, to evidence and prove that both his ministry and his message, his office and his doctrine, were divine, neither of them received from man, but immediately from Jesus Christ. And because the false apostles had suggested that St. Paul taught divers doctrines which were contrary to the judgment and practice of St. Peter and the other apostles, he declares in this chapter how he went up to Jerusalem, and communicated his doctrine which he had preached among the Gentiles, to the most eminent of the apostles, who unanimously subscribed to it, and in a full synod declared their approbation of it: for they perceiving that St. Paul was in an extraordinary manner called of God to be an apostle, both from that divine assistance wherewith he was accompanied, and from those apostolical gifts with which he was endowed, they acknowledged him for an apostle; yea, that he was inferior to none of themselves: to the great shame of the false apostles, who misrepresented him as delivering doctrines which were opposite and contrary to what was taught and practised by the other apostles.

THEN, fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. 2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles; but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

Observe here, 1. How the gracious care and good providence of God did watch over St. Paul from place to place, and from time to time, when and wheresoever he went forth to preach, to plant, and propagate the gospel. After fourteen years he went up to Jerusalem, that is, fourteen years after his conversion; soon after which he went about preaching the gospel

to the Gentile world. Blessed be God, who is oft-times pleased, in mercy to his church, to preserve the lives of his laborious ministers, and their liberties also, for the free exercise of their ministry, notwithstanding the joint endeavours of men and devils to the contrary. This good man, this great apostle, whose blood was thirsted after, having obtained help of God, continued fourteen years together, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Observe, 2. The end, design, and intent of St. Paul, in this present going up to Jerusalem, and appearing before St. Peter there. It was not to acknowledge St. Peter's supremacy over him, or to appeal to him as the infallible judge in matters of religion; but it was in a friendly and brotherly manner to acquaint St. Peter and the rest of the apostles, with the doctrine preached by him; that their concurring approbation being given to it, the mouth of his adversaries, the false apostles, might be stopped, who accused him of preaching contrary to what the rest of the apostles both believed and practised. Observe, 3. The ground upon which St. Paul undertook this journey to Jerusalem at this time: *He went up by revelation*; he advised with God about the matter, and received direction from God to undertake the journey. Blessed be God, that although we cannot expect immediate direction and information from God now, as the saints of old had before the canon of the scripture was completed, yet we have the written word of God to be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths, to direct and guide us in all our enterprizes; and we ought to regulate all our actions according to it, and to judge of the lawfulness and expediency of our undertakings by it. Observe, 4. With what prudence and holy caution the blessed apostle proceeded in this matter: he imparted his sentiments, and communicated his doctrine, to the rest of the apostles, privately, for fear of exasperating the zealous judaizing Christians. And to the most eminent of the apostles, such as were of the greatest reputation; lest if there should be any opposition made to his doctrine, he should hereafter run, or had run, in vain. Nothing more obstructs the success and efficacy of the gospel, than differences of judgment, and strife and debate about those differences amongst the most eminent preachers of it. Hence it was that St. Paul endeavoured so much to get the joint consent of the most eminent apostles to the doctrine delivered by him, lest by the calumnies of his adversaries his preaching should have been rendered unsuccessful, and he should hereafter run and labour in vain.

3 But neither Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: 4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: 5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Observe here, 1. The instance and evidence which St. Paul brings of the apostles at Jerusalem agreeing with him both in their doctrine and in their practice; and that was Titus, who being a Gentile, born a Greek, and now a preacher of the gospel, and never circumcised, the apostles at Jerusalem would no more compel him to be circumcised than St. Paul had done, but received him into fellowship with them, though he was an uncircumcised Greek. This was a plain evidence, that they did not judge circumcision at that time to be a part of God's commanded worship; for then they would have compelled Titus to it; that is, constrained him, by the force of ecclesiastical censures, to become circumcised, had they thought circumcision necessary to the Gentiles. Observe, 2. The reason assigned why the apostle would not circumcise Titus, though he had before circumcised Timothy; namely, because some false brethren, crept in, would have taken advantage from it to bring persons into bondage to the law of ceremonies, and plead conformity to circumcision as an obliged duty. Learn hence, That although the ceremonial law was certainly abolished by the death of Christ, yet Almighty God, partly with respect to it as his own ordinance, and partly in condescension to the weakness of the Jews, was pleased to tolerate the observation of some part of it, and particularly circumcision, as an indifferent action, though not as a part of religion, for some time; the ceremonial rites being dead, they were to be decently, not over-hastily, buried. Observe, 3. The apostle's undaunted courage and heroic resolution in this matter; he would, notwithstanding the false apostles' importunity, never yield subjection or submission to, or compliance with, their commands, in the least measure, by consenting to circumcise Titus; that so the truth and liberty of the gospel might continue sincere and unshaken. Learn hence, That an outward act of compliance must not be consented to, which in some cases might

be complied with, when by making it necessary we turn Christian liberty into servitude and bondage, when things in their own nature indifferent are urged and enforced as necessary; in that case, the practice of a thing indifferent is to be abstained from. Thus here, when false brethren urged the circumcision of Titus, as an evidence of St. Paul's receding from the doctrine of *Christian liberty*, he would not obey them, nor consent unto them. *To whom we gave place, no, not for an hour*; that is, we refused to use circumcision, though but that once, because we would not give the adversaries the least advantage against us, or against the truth delivered and defended by us.

6 But of those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person: for they who seemed to be somewhat, in conference added nothing to me.

As if he had said, "When I came up to Jerusalem, thus I behaved myself towards the false brethren, as I have here declared; but now for those who seemed to be somewhat, that is, Peter, James, and John, who were of chief reputation among the apostles, and more than ordinary ministers of Jesus Christ, being the foundations of the Christian church laid by Christ himself, although they had some external advantages above me, as being apostles before me, and having conversed with Christ, and seen him here on earth, which I never did; yet this maketh no matter to me, for God values no man for these outward favours and benefits: neither in that conference about circumcision did they add any thing to me, either by their authority or instruction; they added nothing, they corrected nothing, but approved all things, both what I did and said. From whence it evidently appears, that my authority was equal with theirs, and my doctrine the same with theirs also."

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; 8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles;) 9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands

of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. 10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

Note here, 1. That the ordinance both of Peter and Paul, for the office and work of apostles, was alike divine. The former, St. Peter, was to be the minister of the circumcision, that is, to exercise his ministry among the Jews; and St. Paul, by virtue of the same divine ordinance, was to exercise his office among the Gentiles, called the uncircumcision; yet this must not be so understood, as if Paul might not preach to the Jews, nor St. Peter to the Gentiles, which they both did upon occasion, but because their more special and particular province was thus, St. Peter to preach to the Jews, and St. Paul to the Gentiles. Learn hence, That the office of preaching the gospel is a special trust, committed by God himself to such as he qualifies for it; and as none must enterprize it but such as he calls unto it, so must all that undertake it be accountable to him for it. *The gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was committed unto Peter.* Note, 2. How this great apostle ascribes the success and efficacy of his own ministry among the Gentiles, and of St. Peter's among the Jews, alike to God: *He that wrought effectually in Peter to the circumcision was also mighty in me toward the Gentiles.* It is neither the person nor pains of the minister, nor any natural energy or efficacy in the word preached, upon which the success of the gospel depends, but upon the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. *He that wrought effectually in Peter, was also mighty in me.* The word of God works not as a natural agent, but as a moral instrument in the hand of the Spirit. The weapons of our ministerial warfare are then mighty, when made mighty through God for the pulling down the strong holds of sin and Satan. Note, 3. The duty of the ministers of Christ implicitly declared, namely, to be pillars; not seeming to be so, but really so. As pillars, they are to uphold the truth, by their doctrine and diligence; as pillars, to be constant in defending the truth against all the blasts and storms of error and false doctrine; as pillars, to adorn the truth, by an innocent life and instructive example, whereby they ought not only to shine before others, but also to outshine others. *When James, Cephas, and John seemed to be pillars.* These three apostles under Christ were the great supporters of the church

of Christ, by their diligence and faithfulness; yet observe, James is here named before St. Peter; which shows the weakness of the papists' argument for Peter's primacy, because sometimes first named. But it is evident he is not always so; St. James is here mentioned before him, because, say some, bishop of Jerusalem, and the Lord's brother or near kinsman; but certain it is, that St. Paul paid not here any deference to Peter, upon the account of his primacy or supremacy, which is now so much contended for, but was not then thought of, because it is the apostle's great drift and design to show that he was in every respect equal with Peter and the rest of the apostles, and in no respect inferior to any of them; and consequently that neither in his mission nor his message, neither in his office nor his doctrine, neither in his external authority nor his internal gifts and graces, did he come behind the chiefest apostles, as the false apostles had misrepresented him. Note farther, St. Peter's integrity, with James' and John's, in this matter: they being all very well satisfied by convincing evidence, that Almighty God had certainly called Paul to be an apostle no less than themselves; they own and acknowledge him for such, no doubt to the grief as well as to the shame of the false apostles who had vilified his person, lessened his authority, and disparaged his doctrine. *When James, Cephas, and John, perceived the grace that was given unto me*, that is, the grace of apostleship, they, in the name of all the apostles, and the whole church, gave unto me, and Barnabas my fellow-labourer, the *right hand of fellowship*; that is, they owned us to be pillars as much as themselves, and acknowledged us to be apostles no less than themselves; and it was agreed and concluded upon, that we should continue to preach chiefly to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. So far were the apostles at Jerusalem from condemning St. Paul's doctrine, or undervaluing his calling, which was the thing that the false apostles were so desirous of and hoped for. Note, lastly, That as an evidence of the happy agreement of Peter, James, and John, with Paul and Barnabas, and of their owning them as apostles and ministers, of Jesus Christ, they recommended to St. Paul's charitable consideration the poverty of the Jewish converts to Christianity, desiring him to make collections in the Gentiles' churches for the Christian Jews. Here observe, 1. That the Jews were generally poorer than the Gentiles: it is frequently the lot of those who are rich in grace to be poor in goods and to be reduced to such straits as

to be forced to live upon some charitable supplies from others. Observe, 2. That although those who are our own poor, and live within our bounds, near us, and about us, are chiefly to be relieved by us; yet in cases of extreme necessity, such poor as live remote from us, whose faces were never seen by us, ought to be sharers in our charity. Observe, 3. That the care of God's poor, and the supplying of the outward necessities of his saints, is an employment not unworthy the highest apostle, much less unbecoming the ordinary ministers of Christ: *They would that we should remember the poor*. Observe, 4. That the faithful ministers of Christ ought, upon just and fit occasions, to excite and stir up their people to duties of charity, as well as piety; to costly and expensive duties, as well as those that are easy and less burdensome; these being no less profitable to the church, and much more evidential of a real work of grace upon the heart. Thus did St. Paul here: the apostles desired me to *remember the poor: the same which I also was forward to do*.

11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

Observe here, St. Peter's offence, and St. Paul's rebuke. St. Peter's offence, 1. was this, He declined from the doctrine taught by himself, concerning the abrogation of circumcision and the ceremonial law; he had formerly conversed freely with the Christian Gentiles, without scruple, making no objection against them because they were not circumcised. But at Antioch he withdrew himself from the Christian Gentiles, refusing to eat with them, because they were not circumcised; as if, for want of circumcision, they had been unclean, and altogether unfit to be conversed with. This was his fault; whereby it appears that St. Peter himself was not infallible, whatever his pretended successors, the bishops of Rome, are supposed to be. Learn hence, How certainly and suddenly the holiest and best of men will run into sin and error, if a special assistance from the Holy Spirit doth not uphold them, and preserve them. Observe, 2. As St. Peter's offence, so St. Paul's rebuke: he *withstood him to the face*; that is, rebuked him publicly, because he was blame-worthy, and not secretly, behind his back; such as sin openly, must be rebuked and reprov'd openly. Here note, How little St. Paul dreamed of St. Peter's supremacy; if so, he had been more modest than thus to reprove him to his face. Learn hence, That as no bands of friendship must keep the

ministers of God from reproving sin and vice: so, when they find the fault to be notorious, they must reprove it wherever they find it with much boldness and resolution. St. Paul here, in reproving St. Peter *withstood* him: it is in the original a military word, signifying *to stand against*, either by force of arms, as among soldiers; or by dint of argument, as among disputants: it is a word of defiance, and signifies an opposition hand to hand, face to face, foot to foot, not yielding an hair's breadth to the adversary. Yet withal, as St. Paul's courage, so his candour appeared in reproving St. Peter to his face, and not reproaching him, as some, behind his back. And behold this great and chief apostle St. Peter submits to his reprover, neither justifying his action, nor reflecting upon St. Paul; he replieth not again.

12 For, before that certain came from James he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. 13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him: insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. 14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

A farther account is given us in these verses of St. Peter's offence at Antioch, in giving occasion of scandal to the Gentiles, by refusing to converse and eat with them, although he had before in a vision received a divine command so to do. St. Paul calls it *fear*, ver. 12. *dissimulation*, ver. 13. and *not walking uprightly*, ver. 14. He refused to converse with the believing Gentiles, being uncircumcised, for fear of offending the believing Jews, who were so tenacious of circumcision, and the ceremonial law. Learn hence, What weakness and inconsistency is found with the best of men, especially when fear gets a prevailing power over them. St. Peter was the minister of the circumcision, in great honour and esteem with the believing Jews; but fearing the loss of his reputation among them, he falls into sin against God. Observe, 2. The fatal influence of that his sin: it drew others into a partnership with him therein; Barnabas himself was led away with the

dissimulation, and the other Jews dissembled with him. Learn hence, That such as are eminent in the church had need be exactly careful how they walk; for if they fall, they fall not alone, many do fall with them. Observe, 3. With what openness and freedom, with what courage and resolution, St. Paul checks and reproves Peter, for his cowardice and timorousness, in refusing to converse with the believing Gentiles, for fear of gaining the displeasure of the circumcised Jews: *I said unto Peter before all, If thou, being a Jew, livest, in thy ordinary conversation, after the manner of the Gentiles, why compellest thou the Gentiles, by thy example, to live as do the Jews?* Where note, What a constraining power there is in the example of eminent persons: he is said to compel, in scripture, not only who doth violently force, but who, being of authority, doth provoke by his example. The errors of those that do rule, become rules of error. Men sin through a kind of authority, through the sins of those who are in authority.

15 We *who are Jews* by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

St. Paul having fully vindicated his own authority as an apostle from the imputations of the false apostles, he comes next to vindicate his doctrine, namely, the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, which he had formerly preached to the Galatians, and which, in his absence, the false apostles had endeavoured to subvert and overthrow, urging the strict observation of the ceremonial law, as necessary to justification and salvation. Our apostle therefore, to strike at the root of this dangerous error, excludes all works of our own from having any influence upon our justification. Now this he proveth, 1. Because they that were Jews by birth, and so federally the holy people of God, found it necessary to renounce the works of the law in point of justification, and to seek righteousness only through faith in Christ, as well as the profane idolatrous sinners of the Gentiles, who were strangers to the covenant of God; *for by the works of the law shall no flesh, neither Jew nor Gentile, be justified*; that is, acquitted from the guilt

of sin, and discharged from obnoxiousness to the wrath of God. Now no obedience of ours can obtain this, because of the great imperfection which cleaves to us, and because God will have all boasting excluded; Eph. ii. 8. *By grace ye are saved, through faith; not of works, lest any man should boast*: but that he that glorieth should glory in the Lord. Observe here, That the doctrine of justification by faith, and not works, was early, very early, opposed by Satan and false teachers. It being *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesie*, a fundamental article of our Christian faith, our comfort stands or falls with it; no wonder then it is strenuously opposed.

17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. 18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

These words are generally looked upon as an objection, which the adversaries of the doctrine of justification by faith have been always ready to make against it, namely, "that if persons be not justified by their obedience to the law, then they may live as they list in the breach and violation of the law, and freely indulge themselves in sin, and consequently make Christ the minister of sin, as if he had relaxed the duty." The apostle rejects this inference and deduction with the greatest abhorrence and detestation, saying *God forbid*. Hence note, That it is no new prejudice, though a very unjust one, against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and not by works, that it opens a door to licentiousness, and makes Christ the minister of sin. Observe farther, A second objection here suggested. Some might pretend that he built up by his practice, what he had destroyed. "No," says the apostle, "I have, together with the doctrine of free justification, preached to you, pressed upon you, the duty of mortification, as of indispensable necessity to be practiced by you: should therefore my preaching or my practice be otherwise than it has been, I should build again what I have destroyed, and destroy what I have already builded; and thus by encouraging sin, and discouraging holiness and obedience, I should be a transgressor against the law of righteousness. Learn hence, That the doctrine of justification by faith alone, cannot be rightly preached, except the duty of mortification of sin be urged and enforced with it; for the same faith that depends upon Christ for pardon of sin doth look up unto him

for power and strength to vanquish and subdue sin: if we do not the latter, Christ will never do the former.

19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

Here the apostle shows that believers are so far from being justified by the law, that they are dead to the law, so as to put no confidence in their obedience to it for justification; particularly, 1. They are dead to the law; that is, they are delivered from the rigorous exactions of the law. Perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience, is the duty which the law exacts at the believer's hand, and he has performed it, though not in himself, yet in the person of Christ his surety, who yielded as absolute and complete obedience to the law as it could require or demand. 2. The law is dead to believers, and they to that, in regard to the condemnatory curse and sentence of the law: Christ hath redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them, *Gal. iii. 15*. True, the believer's violation of the royal and righteous law of God, in the smallest measure and degree, doth in its own nature deserve the curse and condemnatory sentence; but Christ has discharged him from obnoxiousness to the curse, by being made a curse. 3. The law is dead to believers, as to its authority to justify and save them. This is what the law cannot do, being made weak through the flesh; though properly speaking, the law is not weak to us, but we are weak to that; the law has not lost its authority to command, but we our ability to obey; it is as impossible for a fallen sinner to keep the law of God perfectly, as it is for a lame cripple to run a race swiftly. Yet, 4. Believers are not dead, but alive, to the law, as a rule of life and holy living; the law binds the believer (in Christ's hand) as strictly to endeavour obedience to it, as it did Adam in innocency. But here is the believer's privilege, That God the Father, upon the score of the covenant of grace which the blood of Christ has ratified and confirmed, doth graciously accept the faithful endeavours of his children, instead of perfect performances; which obedience the law-covenant did rigorously exact and require. Thus may every believer say with the apostle, *I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God*, namely, a life of righteousness and true holiness.

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the

faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Several things are here observable, viz. St. Paul's spiritual death declared, and his spiritual life described, together with the Author and instrument of it. Observe, 1. St. Paul's spiritual death: *I am crucified with Christ*; that is, with Christ I am dead to the law, (in the manner mentioned in the foregoing verse,) dead to sin, and dead to the world. Learn hence, That all true believers are crucified with Christ Jesus; or that all justified persons have fellowship with Christ in his death. They have fellowship with him, 1. In the merit and value of his death; they are ransomed by it, as a price paid down to the justice of God for them. 2. In the virtue and efficacy of his death, which doth not only merit pardon for us, but mortifies sin in us. *Our old man is crucified*: that is, the power of sin is subdued in us. 3. A justified person hath fellowship with Christ, in the likeness and similitude of his death, and that is a crucifixion; as Christ died a painful, shameful, lingering, and accursed death for him, so doth sin die painfully, shamefully, and gradually in him; *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts*, Gal. v. 24. Observe, 2. St. Paul's spiritual life described: *I live: yet not I, but Christ in me*. Learn hence, That a crucified Christian is a living Christian: *I am crucified: nevertheless I live*, —a life of justification and sanctification at present, in hope of, and as an earnest for, a life of glorification to come. Yet observe, 3. How the apostle corrects, or rather explains, himself, after what kind and in what manner he lives: he denies himself to be the author and root of his own life, and declares Christ to be both. *I live: yet not I, but Christ in me*. Christ is both the author and efficient cause, the exemplary cause, the end or final cause, of the Christian's life; *a living Christian* lives not himself, but *Christ lives in him*. Observe, 4. As the author of the Christian's spiritual life, *Christ*; so the instrument of it, and that is, *faith*. *The life which I live in the flesh*, that is, *the spiritual life* which I live as a Christian here in the world, *I live by faith in the Son of God*; my life of justification is by faith in his blood; my life of sanctification and consolation is through *faith* in, and by influences derived from, his Holy Spirit. Observe, 5. How the apostle appropriates to himself in particular, what Christ had done for all believers in general; *He loved me, and gave himself for me*. Where note, Though a firm persuasion, and a full assurance of Christ's spe-

cial love to ourselves, and his dying for us in particular, is not of the essence and being of justifying and saving *faith*, yet it is attainable without an extraordinary revelation; and as such, every sincere Christian ought to aim at it, to labour and endeavour after it.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

The apostle concludes this chapter with a double argument to prove the Christian's justification by faith, without the works of the law. 1. Were it otherwise, we should frustrate and make void the grace of God. For if justification be by works it can no more be by grace; according to the apostle, *Rom. xi. 6*. 2. Christ's death had been in vain, without any necessary cause or reason at all, if the justification of a sinner could have been obtained by his own works. Where note, That as well works done after faith and conversion, as those done before it, are excluded from being the meritorious cause of our justification, either in whole or in part; because the joining of works with faith, in the matter of our justification, is a total excluding of God's free grace, and a loud proclaiming, that Christ died in vain: *If righteousness come by the law, I frustrate the grace of God, and Christ is dead in vain*.

CHAP. III.

In this and the following chapters of this epistle, our apostle expostulates the case with the Galatians, who were seduced by false apostles to relinquish the liberty they were called to by the gospel, and to put their necks under the Judaical yoke again, so far as to observe circumcision; nay, their days, months, times, and years, of the ceremonial law. And thus they turned again to the works and beggarly elements of the law, from which they had a manumission by the gospel. This seduction of theirs our apostle looks upon as a piece of fascination; accounting them like persons that had been in ill hands, and practised upon by witchcraft. He begins accordingly his holy charm against it, in the first verse of this chapter; in which he thus bespeaks them:

O FOOLISH Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

Observe here, 1. The object of the apostle's sharp reprehension; the churches of Galatia. Observe, 2. The ground of their reprehension: their defection from the truth into a very great error, namely, their holding of circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law, as necessary to salvation; which was a making of the

cross of Christ of no effect, and a virtual denial of his being come in the flesh. From hence we learn, That the best and purest of particular churches may err, and have erred, fundamentally and dangerously: for what consists such a church of, but persons all fallible? Head and members, being all sinful, are as unable to secure themselves from error as from vice. Indeed the church of Rome talks big, and boasts of a false gift, that of infallibility; but could never yet agree where it is lodged, whether in the pope, or in a general council; however, they are sure they have it. Well, if so, the more wicked and wretchedly inexcusable are they, in not improving their talent of infallibility for the best service of the Christian church, namely, by writing one infallible comment upon the whole *Bible*. What a serviceable performance would it have been in them, to pin the pope in his chair, and hold down his hands to write, as Aaron and Hur held up Moses's hands to pray, till all the Amalekite errors and heresies, so much complained of, were routed and ruined! Woe unto them that let such an excellent gift lie idle amongst them, and unemployed by them. Observe, 3. The high and heinous aggravation of this fault in the *Galatians*, before whose eyes *Jesus Christ* had been evidently set forth crucified amongst them; that is, Christ, and then freedom by him from the bondage of the ceremonial law, had been preached to them; and his death and sufferings, with the great end and design of them, as plainly laid before them, as if Christ himself had been crucified in the midst of others. Observe, lastly, The brand of infamy which our apostle sets upon the judaizing doctors, heretical and false teachers; he calls them spiritual sorcerers, and their doctrine spiritual witchcraft. *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?* Because, 1. As sorcerers, by deluding their senses, make persons apprehend they see what they see not; so heretics by casting a mist of seeming reason before the understanding, to delude it, and make the deluded person believe that to be truth, which indeed is not. 2. As sorcerers, in what they do, are assisted beyond the reach of their own ability and skill by the help of Satan; so heretical spirits are often, by Satan's concurrence with them, more than ordinarily assisted by him in drawing multitudes after them. *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?* The original word seems borrowed from the practice of witches and sorcerers, who, being assisted by the devil, use to cast mists before the eyes of the people, to dazzle and delude them.

2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Our apostle having prepared the *Galatians'* attention, by a very smart and sharp reprehension in the foregoing verse, returns to the subject of justification by faith, without the works of the law, which he had entered upon in the former chapter, and prosecutes at large in this; and he uses five arguments to prove that we are justified by *faith*, and not by *works*. The first is contained in the verse before us, *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* As if the apostle had said, "I appeal to your own experience; you have received the Spirit yourselves, some of you for sanctification, others for miraculous operations; now I would know by what means you received it; was it by hearing the law of Moses preached? You cannot say it; for you were heathens, and without the written law: it must then be by hearing of the gospel, the doctrine of *faith*, which I preached to you." Here we have a truth expressed, and a truth implied. The truth expressed is this, That the hearing of the gospel faithfully preached is the instrumental mean by which persons receive the Holy Spirit in the sanctifying gifts and graces of it, to enable them to live an holy and spiritual life. *Received ye not the Spirit by the hearing of faith?* Yes, ye did. The truth implied, is this, That a people should take great heed that they never undervalue, much less despise and vilify, that ministry, or that doctrine, which God at first blessed for their conversion. How many are there in England at this day, who disown that church, despise that ministry, which God blessed to their conversion, if ever they were converted! Sad it is, yet very certain, that like vipers they gnaw out the bowels of her who suckled them at her breast.

3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Observe here, The apostle calls the doctrine of the gospel, *Spirit*; because, by hearing the gospel preached, they had received both the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. The law with all its rites and ceremonies, he calls *flesh*: because they were now weak, and being but temporary institutions, were abolished by the coming of Christ and the gospel. Observe next, How the apostle endeavours to convince the *Galatians* of the folly and absurdity of hoping to perfect that in the flesh,

which they had begun in the Spirit; *Are ye so foolish?* As if he had said, "That having, at your entrance into Christianity, begun an holy life, by and according to the Holy Spirit conferred upon you, that now you should think it to be made more perfect by the *flesh*, by the external commandments and observances of the law: how unreasonable is it to suppose that your justification should be begun by a more noble, and perfected by a less noble, cause!"

4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.

As if the apostle had said, "To what purpose have you suffered so many persecutions from the Jews for the cause of Christianity? All which sufferings will be in vain, if, after all, you bring yourselves under the bondage of the Jewish yoke; for these might have been escaped, had you owned the necessity of circumcision, and other legal observances. But I hope you will recollect yourselves, and persevere in your first profession, without which all your former labours, your past and present sufferings, will avail you nothing." Intimating, that all the good actions we have done, and the hard things which we have suffered, will be altogether in vain to us, if we do not persevere in well-doing and patient suffering unto the end. *Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.* Note here, 1. That it has been from the beginning the lot and portion of such as profess Christianity, to suffer many things in the defence of it. Note, 2. That it is very possible for some of those who have made an early and long profession of Christianity, yea, and suffered hard things for it, after all to make a foul defection and apostasy from it. Note, 3. That all such sufferings have been, are, and will be, in vain, and turn to no joyful account, if the persons suffering do afterward apostatize from, and turn their backs upon, the truths of God formerly embraced and maintained by them: *Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.*

5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Observe here, 1. That God did accompany the first preaching and planting of the gospel with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, with a power to work miracles, to heal diseases, and to speak with tongues, which were so many attestations and confirmations that the doctrine of the gospel

was from God; for here St. Paul appeals to the Galatians, as men that had the Spirit and miracles amongst them, *He that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles;* implying, that Almighty God had given to them his Holy Spirit, both in the sanctifying graces and miraculous gifts of it. Observe, 2. That the Spirit thus communicated in the first and early days of Christianity, was not given to the Galatians, or any other Gentiles, by the preaching of the law, but by the ministry and dispensation of the gospel, which is here called, *the hearing of faith: He that ministereth to you the Spirit, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Learn hence, That although the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit are conveyed to the hearers of the gospel by the ministry of the word, yet God is the author, the minister, and dispenser of them, and the gospel only the instrument and mean of their conveyance: *He ministereth to you the Spirit.*

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. **7** Know ye therefore, that they which *are* of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Here our apostle proceeds to a second argument, to prove that persons are justified by faith, and not by works; and that is drawn from the example of Abraham; and the argument lies thus: "As Abraham, the father of the faithful, was justified; so must all believers, the children of faithful Abraham, be justified also. But though Abraham did abound in many virtues and good works, yet he was not justified by these, but by faith only; therefore by faith must all his children be justified also. *Abraham believed God;* that is, assented to, and relied upon, the promise of God made unto him, That in him, that is, in the Messiah, who was to descend from him, *should all the nations of the earth be blessed:* and this *faith* of his was accounted, imputed, and reckoned to him for *righteousness:* that is, was accepted of God for his justification." From whence the apostle doth infer or draw this conclusion, that such as seek justification by faith, as Abraham did, *are the children of Abraham*, as the Gentiles were; that is, the children of his *faith:* a far greater privilege than what the Jews gloried in, namely, that they were the children of his *flesh*. Learn hence, That as the pious Jews under the Old Testament, so are Christians now under the New Testament, justified alike. Were they justified freely? so are we. Are we justified fully? so were they. Was a righteousness neces-

sary for them to be clothed with, in order to their acceptance with God? the same is necessary for us also. Was faith imputed by God to them for righteousness? so shall it be to us also.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Observe here, That because the former consequence from Abraham's justification to ours might be questioned, whether it holds in the Gentiles, who were not of Abraham's posterity; therefore the apostle declares, That the greatest promise made to him, *that in him*, that is, in the Messias, Christ Jesus, who was to come of him, *all nations*, Gentiles as well as Jews, *should be blessed*; God having determined that all believers indefinitely, of what nation or kindred soever, should be all justified one and the same way, namely, by faith in Christ, without the works of the law. So that all that are of faith, or true believers, whether Gentiles or Jews, do partake of all those benefits and blessings which believing Abraham did partake of, amongst which justification by faith is the chief. Learn hence, 1. That the gospel is no new doctrine, but the same for substance, though not for clearness, with that which was preached to Abraham, and to the church under the Old Testament: *The scripture preached before the gospel unto Abraham*. Learn, 2. That the blessing of justification by faith, and of other spiritual favours promised to the nations in Abraham, was such as Abraham himself was a sharer in, and partaker of; they were blessed with faithful Abraham.

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Here is a third argument produced in this chapter, to prove that we are justified by faith, and not by works; because they who seek to be justified by the works of the law, are under the curse; and if so, cannot be justified. The argument runs thus, "Our observance of the law, when at the best, is but imperfect. Now every imperfect performance lays us under the curse: therefore no performance of ours

can justify us. They that cannot fulfil the law, can never be justified by the law. But no fallen man can perfectly fulfil the law: Therefore none can be justified by the law." This is the force of the argument, which the apostle proves by a quotation out of *Deut. xxvii. 26*. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*. Where note,

1. The duty which the law exacts: namely, perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience. 2. The penalty which the law inflicts, and that is, the curse: *Cursed is every one, &c*. Learn hence, That sin and the curse are inseparable; wherever sin is, the curse will be, be it upon a person by imputation, or by actual commission: wherever sin lies, it lays us under the curse; for sin is an infinite evil, objectively considered; it is a contempt of infinite authority, a contrariety to infinite holiness, a provocation of infinite justice, and an abuse of infinite mercy; and consequently, the desert of sin is death and the curse.

11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith. 12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

A fourth argument is here produced to prove, that no sinner can be justified before God by the works of the law, although before men he may. The argument is this, taken from *Hab. ii. 4*. *The just shall live by faith*; that is, live his spiritual life by faith, his life of justification and sanctification also: the life of his righteousness before God, of his holiness before men, and his life of glory with God in heaven, are all by faith. He adds, ver. 12. *The law is not of faith*; that is, the law says nothing of faith in a Mediator, or promises life to any person, save only to him who by a sinless obedience performs exactly what it prescribes; but the voice of the law is, *Do, or die*. Learn hence, *That the law and faith*, that is, the law and the gospel, are not contrary to each other, but are mutually subservient one to another in many things; as thus, when the law makes known sin, the gospel holds forth the remedy for sin; The law discovers our need of Christ, the gospel makes an offer and gracious tender of Jesus Christ; the law makes known to us our entire duty, the gospel furnishes us with strength and ability to perform that duty. Learn, 1. That though the law and faith, (that is, the gospel, which is the doctrine of faith,) be not contrary to each other, yet in point of

justification they are mutually inconsistent one with another; so that if justification be by the works of the law, it cannot be had by faith; if it be had by faith, it cannot be attained by the works of the law. There can be no mixture of law and gospel, of faith and works, in this matter.

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

This is the apostle's fifth and last argument, to prove that we are justified by faith; and that, notwithstanding the threats of the law, a believer is freed from the curse and malediction of the law, by Christ's bearing the curse for him. *Christ hath redeemed us, &c.* Where note, 1. The believer's happy discharge from the most dismal and dreadful thing imaginable; namely, the condemnatory sentence and curse of the law, whereby a sinner is bound over to death, even to death of soul and body. 2. The person that doth and only can deliver the sinner from this condemnatory curse and sentence; and that is Jesus Christ. He discharges the believer from his obnoxiousness to wrath, dissolves his obligation to punishment, looses all bands, and chains of guilt: so that the curse of the law has nothing, and shall have nothing, to do with him for ever. 3. The way and manner in and by which Jesus Christ effecteth all this for us; namely, by his being made a curse for us; not that Christ was made the very curse itself, or changed into a curse, but he took the curse upon himself; our sin became his, by a voluntary susception of the punishment; and Christ underwent that death, the death of the cross, which by the law was accursed, to free us from the curse of the law: as Christ was made sin for us, so was he made a curse for us. Now, as he was made sin, not by contracting the guilt of sin, but by suffering the punishment of sin; so he was made a curse, by undergoing that death which the law styles accursed.

14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Observe here, One special fruit of Christ's sufferings, and being made a curse for us; namely, that the curse being abolished, the blessing of Abraham, that is, the blessing of justification, reconciliation, and adoption, promised to Abraham upon his believing, might come upon all the believing Gen-

tiles, through Christ, the promised seed; and that the Gentiles might receive the promises, made by Christ, of the Holy Spirit, both in its miraculous gifts and sanctifying graces, through their submission to the faith of Christ, or the doctrine of the gospel. Learn hence, 1. That Christ, by submitting to the curse of the law, did not only appease the wrath of God towards us, and deliver us from the curse of the law deserved by us, but purchased all spiritual blessings for us, such as grace here, and glory hereafter. *Christ was made a curse, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles.* O wonderful grace, infinite love, and astonishing goodness of God, in that great work of our redemption, in bringing about one contrary by another! He giveth life by death, and the blessing by the curse: *Christ was made a curse, that the blessing might come upon the Gentiles.* Learn, 2. That there was a promise of divers blessings made to Abraham; namely, that God would give him a son, a son by Sarah, a son in his old age, and by that son a numerous issue; that that issue should become a mighty nation, and possess all the land of Canaan, wherein he then sojourned; and that he would settle his covenant, that is, his church, in that family and nation; and that in one person descending from his posterity, all nations should be blessed; and that this blessing, introduced by that one person, should abolish the curse brought upon all nations by the first person's sin: *That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.*

15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. 16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. 17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. 18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Observe here, 1. An argument drawn from contracts among men, to prove the fixedness and stability of the covenant

made by God: if one man makes a covenant with another, signs it, seals it, and delivers it before witnesses, it becomes irrevocable and irreversible; much more then must the covenant of grace and mercy made with us by God be perpetual and immutable, since it is a covenant established by oath; and when God swears, he cannot repent. Observe, 2. The apostle proves, That as the covenant of God can never fail, in regard of the wisdom and invariableness of Him that made it; so it can never expire for want of parties that have interest in it and advantage by it, for want of a seed to whom it is made; for so long as Christ hath a church and members upon earth, so long shall the promise be of force. Not only to Abraham, but to his seed, were the promises made; not of seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed which is Christ; where, by one, we understand one mystically, and in the aggregate; not one personally and individually; and by Christ, the whole church, consisting of head and members, believing Gentiles as well as Jews. Observe, 3. That the apostle having confirmed the truth of his doctrine by arguments, in the foregoing part of the chapter, comes now in the latter part of it to answer objections, which some might be ready to make against his doctrine. The first we have, ver. 17. *This I say, that the covenant, which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul.* The objection lies thus: Some might say, "When two laws are made, whereof the one was expressly contradictory to the other, the latter doth, in common presumption, abrogate and disannul the former. But here we find that four hundred and thirty years after the promise made to Abraham, there was a law published extremely contrary to that promise, a law without mercy or compassion, a law both impossible and inexorable, a law which can neither be obeyed nor endured, a law which denounces a terrible and severe curse to the transgressors and breakers of it; therefore it should seem as if some cause had happened, to make God repent and revoke his former covenant-promise made to Abraham." To obviate this objection, our apostle shows, first, What the purpose of the covenant-promise to Abraham was; namely, to give life and salvation by grace and promise. Secondly, What the purpose of the latter covenant by Moses was not; namely, to give the same life by working; since in those respects there would be a contradiction and inconsistency in the covenants, and so by consequence instability and un-

faithfulness in him that made them. That therefore which the apostle here drives at, is this, That the coming of the law hath not voided the promise, and that the law is not of force towards the seed to whom the promise is made, in any such sense as carries contradiction to, or implies abrogation of, the promise before made: from whence it follows, if it be not to stand in contradiction to, it must stand in subordination to, the gospel, and so tend to evangelical purposes. Learn hence, 1. That although God might have dealt with mankind as absolute Lord and Sovereign, yet he doth not govern them barely by a law, but by a covenant which has promises and threatenings annexed. Learn, 2. That after the covenant of works, made with man before the fall, was broken by Adam, God was pleased to enter into a covenant of grace with fallen man, to deliver him out of an estate of sin and misery, and to bring him into a state of salvation by a Redeemer. Learn, 3. That though the former and latter covenant did differ in some considerable circumstances, yet they are one and the same in substance, and do fully agree in all the essential parts of both. Learn, 4. That God's intent in giving the law, and urging exact obedience to it, under the penalty of the curse, was not to take us off from seeking righteousness and life only by the promise, but to encourage us to seek it; for, says the apostle here, *The law could not disannul the covenant made with Abraham, nor make the promise of no effect.*

19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one.

Here an objection is moved: Some might be ready to say, "If the law, that is, works done in obedience to the law, do not justify, then the law given by Moses upon mount Sinai is in vain, and to no purpose; for why was the law given, enjoining so many duties, promising life to the obedient, and threatening wrath and a curse to the disobedient, if the inheritance come not by the law?" The apostle answers, That one great end for which the law was given was, to discover sin, and a sinner's undone condition by reason of sin, and to lead him to seek out for a remedy. *The law was added because of transgression, that is, to make transgression appear, to dis-*

cover the pollutions of men's hearts and natures, and make them sensible of the condemnation they are under. *The law was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come*; that is, Christ and his church. Where note, That the legal dispensations were not to continue always in the church, but only till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; at whose death the partition-wall was broken down, and the Gentiles called into the fellowship of the church, as well as the Jews. Observe farther, The glorious and amazing manner in which the law was given upon Mount Sinai; in thunder and lightning by the *ministry of angels* in such a terrible manner, that there was no access for sinful man to God but by Moses, a mediator, standing betwixt God and them; who in that action was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and us. As Moses was a typical, national, and representative mediator, standing between the Lord and that people of the Jews, so Christ was a substantial and universal Mediator between God and mankind. Where note, That the law was published in mercy and pacification, not in fury and revenge; for had the Lord intended death in the publishing of the law, he would not have proclaimed it in the hand of a mediator, but of an executioner. He adds, *That a mediator is not a mediator of one*, that is, of one party, but of disagreeing parties. God and man were once friends; they were one, and needed no mediator. But God and man, by sin, fell at variance, and now need a mediator. The very notion of a mediator doth suppose, that men, by sin, are at odds with God, and that God, by grace, is willing to be one with man. However, though a mediator is not a mediator of one, yet *God is one*; that is, though there be two covenants, and two mediators, yet God is one and the same in both covenants; he carries on one and the same purpose and intention, both in the law and in the gospel: namely, a benevolence and good-will towards, and an hearty desire and reconciliation with, mankind.

21 *Is the law then against the promises of God?* God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Another objection is here made by the apostle: The Jews might possibly say,

"that the law given by Moses was against the promise of God given to Abraham." The apostle answers, No; that the law is not contrary, but subservient to the promise; for the law was not given on mount Sinai, to afford life and justification by obedience to it, (seeing it could not by a fallen creature be ever perfectly kept,) but to convince of sin, and to condemn for sin; and that men despairing of salvation in and of themselves, might speedily betake themselves to Christ for it. For God in the scripture hath *concluded*, that is, declared, all men to be under sin, and under the curse due to sin; that, renouncing all confidence in themselves, they should, by faith, have recourse to the only Mediator for righteousness and life, for justification and salvation. Learn hence, That God, in the publication of the law by Moses on mount Sinai, had none but merciful and evangelical intentions. 2. That the publication of the law by Moses, was not against the promise of God made to Abraham; but they had both the same merciful design and gracious intention. To explain the matter by a similitude or illustration, thus: "Suppose a prince should proclaim a pardon to all traitors, if they would come in and plead it; and after this should send forth an officer to attack and arraign them, to threaten and condemn them: is the prince contrary to himself? hath he repented of his mercy? No, sure! but he is unwilling to lose the glory of his mercy, and most desirous to have the honour of it acknowledged; and therefore he bringeth these criminals into extremities, that when their guilt is made evident, they may acknowledge the justice of the law that would condemn them, and the great mercy of the prince in offering a pardon to them." The case is alike between God and us: first to Abraham, and in him to us: God made a promise of mercy and blessedness, even to all that would plead an interest in it, for remission of sins, and acceptance with God. But the world grew secure: and though sin was in them, and death reigned over them, they regarded not their miserable condition: being without a law to evidence sin and death unto their consciences, they saw no necessity of pleading the promise of pardon. Hereupon Almighty God publishes by Moses a severe and terrible law, a law which filled the air with thunder, and the mount with fire, insomuch that Moses, the mediator, did exceedingly fear and quake; in all this God did but pursue his first purpose of mercy, and take a course to make his gospel accounted worthy of all acceptance, that men, being by this law roused from

their security, and made sensible of the curse and malediction they lie under, might run from Sinai unto Sion, from Moses to Christ, and, by faith, plead that pardon and remission which in Christ was promised, when God told Abraham, that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Before faith came, that is, before Christ came, and the doctrine of faith was preached, we were in bondage under the law; the ceremonial law was a very great bondage: their frequent going up to Jerusalem at their festivals, was burdensome; their ceremonies were many, inconvenient, and chargeable; their laws for uncleanness and purifications, rendered them unconvertible at all times with other people, and sometimes unconvertible with one another: yet was the law very useful to the Jews, that so they might be prepared by it to receive the doctrine of Christ, and salvation by faith in him. Hence it is that he calleth the law their schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ; the schoolmaster exercises authority over minors only, not overgrown persons; he teaches only rudiments and first principles for beginners, not such things as require mature judgment and perfect age. Such was the law in comparison of the gospel, and Moses with respect to Christ. Moses and the law is a rigid and severe schoolmaster, who by whips and threats require an hard lesson of their scholars, whether able to learn it or not: but Christ and the gospel, is a mild and gentle teacher, who by sweet promises and good rewards invite their scholars to their duty, and guide and help them to do what of themselves they cannot do; by which means they love both their master and their lesson, and rejoice when it is nearest to them, to direct them in their studies. As the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, so Christ is our great prophet that leads us to God. Note farther, That though the law was a good schoolmaster to the Jews in their infancy and minority, yet it has no authority over Christians now grown up to maturity. The gospel church, that is, both believing Jews and Gentiles, being like a son come

to age, believing in Christ already come, are no longer to be treated as children under the discipline of the law as a schoolmaster; for they are now under the evangelical, not Mosaical, dispensation of the covenant of grace. After that faith is come; that is, Christ the object of faith manifested, and the gospel, the doctrine of faith revealed, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Observe here, 1. A glorious gospel privilege discovered, namely, adoption: ye are the children of God. The church of God, under the New Testament, is in a special state of sonship and adoption, to whom the privilege and immunities of sons and heirs grown up to maturity do belong. Observe, 2. The universality of this privilege, ye are all children of God; that is, all, both Jews and Gentiles, all, both weak and strong believers: substantial relations do not *recipere magis et minus*; he that is a father in reality, cannot be more a father to one child than to another; the young one in the cradle may call the parent father, as well as he that is grown to man's estate: ye are all the children of God. Observe, 3. The instrumental cause of this blessed privilege: faith in Christ Jesus. Christ invests every believer, weak as well as strong, in the glorious privilege of adoption: faith in Christ to come, did entitle believers under the Old Testament to the dignity of sons and daughters; and faith in Christ now already come, doth add some peculiar dignity of sonship to believers under the New Testament. They with us and we with them, are all the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus: Christ of a son became a servant, that we of slaves might become sons.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.

What the apostle had asserted in the foregoing verse, he proves in this, namely, that all believers are the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus, because they are baptized into Christ, and have put on Christ; that is, they are admitted into the Christian church by baptism, they profess Christ's holy religion, and if they live as they profess, they put on Christ; that is, they are made partakers of his Spirit, and do copy forth the excellences of his life. To put on Christ, is not as to put on a suit of clothes fitted to the body, but as metal cast in the mould, receiving the figure from it. Happy are they who are not only sa-

cramentally, but really and spiritually, baptized into Christ; incorporated into him, and made one body with him by faith; who do not only bear his name, but wear his image.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

As if the apostle had said, "Now since the coming of Christ there is no difference or discrimination between one nation and another; no regard to any national privilege, either of Jew or Gentile; no distinction of conditions, either bond or free; or of sexes, either male or female: but, circumcised or uncircumcised, we are all one as good as another, in respect of outward privileges, or external advantages; and being sincere believers, we are all equally accepted of God in Christ." Learn hence, That no external privilege or prerogative whatsoever, without faith in Christ, is any whit available to salvation; none are debarred from Christ, nor more nor better accepted with him for any of these things: both the circumcised and uncircumcised are his, if believing in Christ.

29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

That is, "If ye be Christ's servants and subjects, then are ye the true seed of faithful Abraham, and heirs of the blessing, according to the promise made to him and to his seed." This our apostle asserts, in opposition to the false apostles, who maintained that there could be none truly reputed Abraham's seed, except they were circumcised, and subjected themselves to the law of Moses. "Yes," says the apostle, "if ye be Christ's, and by baptism ingrafted into him, you are the children of Abraham, though ye be not circumcised; yea, you are heirs apparently of the heavenly inheritance given unto Abraham by promise." Learn hence, That all sincere and serious Christians are Abraham's spiritual seed, children of his faith, though not of his flesh; and being children of his faith, are heirs together with him of the same promises. *If ye be Christ's, that is, sincere and serious Christians, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

CHAP. IV.

Our apostle further proceeds in this chapter, to clear the freedom of Christians, under the gospel, from the servitude and bondage of the Mosaic law. He shows that the abolished ceremonies

of the legal dispensation were properly suited to the minority and infant state of the Jewish church, which required instruction in spiritual mysteries, by carnal resemblances: but that now Christ, by his actual appearance in human flesh, hath obtained our freedom from all those yokes, and put us into a fuller possession of the rights of children, even such as are come to age, and are grown up to riper years. The Jewish church before Christ, our apostle compares to an infant in respect of age, they were babes and children; to a servant, in respect of fears and subjection; to a pupil under tutors and governors, under the tuition of a cruel schoolmaster, the law, acquainted only with the first rudiments of religion, the high mysteries of faith being not so clearly manifested, nor made known unto them. And accordingly the apostle thus bespeaks them:

NOW I say, *That* the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; 2 But is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

The apostle, in these words, compares the church of God, under the Old Testament, to an infant or child in its minority and nonage; partly with respect to their weakness in understanding, and want of the means of knowledge comparatively to what we enjoy; and, partly, with respect to the discipline they were under from their rigid schoolmaster, the ceremonial law. "Now," says the apostle, "as a child, though he be heir to, and owner of, all his Father's inheritance in hope, yet so long as he is a minor, and under age, he differeth nothing from a servant, in point of subjection, but is under the management of tutors and directors: in like manner the church when in its infant state, under the Old Testament, was kept in bondage and subjection under the rigid administration and rigorous exaction of the law, and tied to almost a numberless number of ceremonial observances, by which it pleased Almighty God to instruct the former ages of his church." Learn hence, That the Jewish church, in its infant state, was obliged to learn and practice the elements of a religion chiefly consisting in visible and bodily performances of the ceremonial law; which were but rudiments, in respect of that heavenly doctrine concerning spiritual life which the gospel now reveals, and clearly makes known unto us: *When we were children, we were in bondage under the elements of the world.*

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the

law. 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

That is, "When the fulness of time was come, which God the Father had appointed for the finishing of the legal dispensation, and for the abolishing the ceremonial rites, God sent forth from himself the Son of himself, his only-begotten Son, *made*, that is, born of a woman, made under and obedient to the law, subjecting himself both to its precepts and its curse, to redeem them who were under the law, and discharge them from the curse and the malediction of it: that we believers, we the members of the Christian church, might receive the adoption of sons, without any observance of circumcision, or other ceremonial rites." Observe here, 1. That Christ was God's Son, his own Son, the Son of himself, as the original calls him, *Rom. viii. 3.* his Son, not barely in regard of his miraculous conception, or in regard of his sanctification and mission, or in regard of his resurrection and exaltation, or in regard of that endeared affection which the Father bare unto him; but in regard of his essence and nature as begotten by him: his Son by eternal and ineffable generation; being for nature co-essential, for dignity co-equal, and for duration co-eternal, with the Father. Observe, 2. That Christ, God's own Son, was sent forth by God the Father; *God sent forth his Son.* This sending of the Son doth, 1. Presuppose his pre-existence before his incarnation; (for if he had not had a being, he could not have been sent;) it supposes also his personality, and that he was a Person, not an operation or manifestation only, for that he could not be sent; and that he was a Person really distinct from the Father, for how else could one send the other? 2. God's sending of Christ doth imply his ordaining, constituting, and appointing Christ from all eternity to come into the world; also his fitting and qualifying him for his incarnation, and his authorizing and commissioning of Christ to take our nature upon him, and in that nature to do and suffer for us, as our pattern, and as our surety. Observe, 3. That Christ, God's own Son, sent forth by God the Father, was made of a woman, did really assume and take upon him our flesh, and was made manifest in our nature. It was not an indigested, unshapen mass or lump of flesh, that Christ assumed, but that flesh was organized and formed into a perfect body, having the same parts, members, lineaments, and proportions, which ours have; St. Paul calls it, *Colos. i. 22.* *the body of his flesh*; a body, to show the organiza-

tion of it; and a body of flesh, to show the reality of it. Observe, 4. That the season in which Christ was sent forth, was not in the beginning of time, nor at the end of time, but in the fulness of time. He came not in the beginning of time; to excite his people's affections and longing desires for his coming, and to teach them to prize him the more when come. He staid not till the end of time; lest the faith of the church and people should have failed. The patriarchs believed in Christ to come, the apostles believed in Christ then present among them, and we believe in Christ as come, and gone again to heaven. Thus in all differences of time past, present, and to come, faith had, has, and will have, its suitable work and proper employment. Observe, 5. That the great end of God in sending Christ unto us, and the gracious design of Christ in his undertaking for us, was our redemption from the bondage and curse of the law, and our adoption into the number of God's children: *To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

As if the apostle had said, "That you are now, under the gospel, become and made the sons of God, appeareth by this, that God hath sent the Spirit of his natural Son into your hearts, to authorize and enable you to call upon him, not only as your God, but as your Father; the gospel assuring you, that you are no longer in that servile condition you were in whilst under the law; but God will deal with you now upon gospel terms, and justify you by faith without the deeds of the law. Now God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." Observe here, 1. The title given to the Holy Spirit: it is called *the Spirit of God's Son*: that is, the Spirit of Christ; because it is the same Spirit which abode upon him that rested upon us, and because the Spirit is purchased and procured for us by the blood of the Son. Those *streams of living water*, by which the effusion of the Spirit is expressed, do flow out of Christ's pierced side: Christ purchased the Spirit for us, before he sent him from heaven to us. Observe 2. The act respecting his person; *God hath sent forth.* This imports not any change of place, as if he were more distant from the Father when he was thus sent than he was before; but it notes his commission for some special work in and upon the creature. Ob-

serve, 3. The objects which have the benefits of this act: *God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts*, that is, into the hearts of believers; signifying, that the work here intended is an inward work, and a saving work, *Ezek. xxxvi. 27. I will put my Spirit in them*; not into the brain, to dwell there by common, unsanctified gifts, but into the heart, where all the habits of grace are planted, and from whence all the issues of life proceed. Observe, 4. The office which the Holy Spirit performs in the believer's heart: first, it cries; secondly, it cries *Abba, Father*. The Spirit cries, by enabling us through his gracious influences and assistances to cry or pray unto God; and it cries, *Father, Father*; the repetition made, and the word redoubled, denotes the strength and vehemency of the desire, and speaks a passionate and extraordinary concernment of soul, for obtaining the mercy desired, and the blessings prayed for. Learn hence, 1. That there are three sacred Persons in the blessed Godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; all are held forth to us in this single verse, yea, in this single clause of the verse, *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son*. Learn, 2. That the Spirit is not a quality or operation, but a person that has a real being and substance; else the phrase of being sent could not be properly applied to him. Learn, 3. That the Holy Spirit proceeds both from the Father and the Son; for he is the Spirit of the Son, and he is sent by the Father. There is an order among the Divine persons, though no priority of being. Learn, 4. That the Spirit of adoption is a spirit of supplication; and the spirit of supplication is the great privilege and advantage of believers under the gospel: for it teaches us what to pray for, and the manner how we are to pray; it joineeth with our prayers his own effectual intercessions; it gives us a right and privilege to come unto God as unto a Father, and gives us also confidence and assurance as sons to be accepted with him. Learn, 5. That the great privilege of adoption is both discovered and improved by the help of the Spirit of Christ. Our privilege of sonship under the gospel excels by far theirs under the law: 1. In point of manifestation and clearness; 2. As to fulness and amplitude of enjoyment

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Note here, 1. That the spirit of the first covenant was a servile spirit, a spirit of fear and bondage, and they that were under that covenant were rather servants than sons; not but that true believers, in

and under the Old Testament, were the sons and daughters of the most high God, and we find them challenging their privilege, *Isa. lxiii. 16. Doubtless thou art our Father*. But yet it was in so defective a degree, that they seemed more like to servants than to sons, and were trained up under suitable discipline. Hence says the apostle here, *Thou art now no more a servant*: implying, they were once so. Note, 2. That the spirit of the new covenant is a free and ingenuous spirit, and the gospel state a more filial state than the legal state was: *Thou art now no more a servant, but a son*; and if sons, then are you heirs of God, and have a right to the inheritance of heaven when you die, and to the blessed privileges and royal immunities contained in that great charter and covenant of grace whilst you live: *If a Son, then an heir of God through Christ*.

8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. 9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Our apostle having proved sufficiently the believing Christians' freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law; next endeavours to convince the Galatians how absurd and unreasonable it was for them voluntarily to put themselves under the obligation and obedience of it, and to look upon it as necessary to their justification and salvation. Now in the verses before us he tells them, that when they were Gentiles they were the worst of slaves, serving them that were no gods at all; whereas the Jews served the true God, though in a servile manner. These Galatians, being heathens before conversion, served false gods, and so were in a bondage much worse than that of the Jews. The apostle therefore justly blames them, that they being naturally Gentiles, and never under the ceremonial law, should now desire and choose to enter into that bondage: which was apparently to go backward in religion, or to return to those principles which they had already overpast. Thence learn, That it is possible for a professing people to advance very far in the way of Christianity, and yet make a foul retreat afterwards in a course of defection and apostasy: *After ye have known God*, that is, acknowledged the living and true God, and been acknowledged by him, *how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly*

elements? Here note, How contemptuously, or at least disesteemingly, our apostle speaks of the legal rites of the ceremonial law: he calls them *elements* or rudiments, because they were God's first instructions given to his church for his worship, to which he intended afterwards a more perfect way of worship. Next he calls them *weak elements*, because the law made nothing perfect, and the observance of it was impotent and unavailable to a sinner's justification before God. And, lastly, he calls them *beggarly elements*, in comparison of that more rational and spiritual way of worship under the gospel. Whence we may learn, That holy zeal will teach a saint to speak with a sort of contempt of any thing that encroaches upon the honour due to Christ, or any of his offices. True, the Levitical ceremonies were appointed by God himself, as a part of divine worship leading to Christ, and as such to be religiously observed; but when the false apostles did urge the observation of them under the gospel, as a part of necessary commanded worship, and as a part of the Galatians' righteousness before God, St. Paul is bold then to give them the name of *weak and beggarly elements*.

10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. 11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

St. Paul here gives instances to the Galatians, wherein it did appear that they brought themselves under an unnecessary bondage to the rites of the ceremonial law: he tells them plainly, that they kept the ceremonial sabbaths, feasts, and fasts, as if that law was obligatory, and still binding: "*Ye observe days*, that is, the Jewish sabbath-days, and new moons; *and months*, as the feast of the first month, and of the seventh month; *and times*, that is, the times of the solemn festivals for going up to Jerusalem, as the *passover*, *pentecost*, and *feasts of tabernacles*; *and years*, as the sabbatical years, and years of jubilee. This, says the apostle, makes me afraid of you, that I have preached the gospel, and the doctrine of free justification by faith, in vain to you; because you leave the doctrine I taught you, and put your confidence in observing those legal ceremonial rites." Learn hence, 1. That the work of the ministry is a laborious work: *I have bestowed upon you labour*, says St. Paul. A minister's life is not a life of ease, but of much toil and pains, a labouring unto faintness and weariness, as the word here used doth import and signify. Learn, 2. That the most laborious ministers and lively preach-

ers may sometimes see so little fruit of their labours and endeavours, that they may have just cause to fear that few are savingly converted by their ministry: St. Paul here was afraid, *lest he had laboured in vain* among the Galatians. Learn, 3. That in order to the success of our ministry, we must not content ourselves with a reproof of sin in general, but must descend to particulars, and give instances of those several and distinct sins which our people are guilty of, and ought to fall under our reproof for. Thus the apostle here gives particular instances of the sins formerly reproofed, in their observing *days*, *and months*, *and times*, *and years*. Generals, we say, do not affect; but particular reproofs are more piercing and more convincing. When we say to a sinner, as Nathan to David, *Thou art the man*; this, if any thing, will stick close to the conscience.

12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.

Observe here, The holy wisdom of our apostle, in tempering his former reproofs with great mildness and gentleness: *I beseech you, brethren*. He well knew that these Galatians were alienated in their affections from him; and fearing lest, from his present severity and sharpness towards them, they should apprehend that he was alienated from them also, he thus lovingly bespeaks them; "I pray you, be affected towards me, as I stand affected towards you: count me not your enemy because I tell you the truth; for I am the same to you that ever I was; my love is not alienated from you, for any wrong or injury done to me by you: for, alas, it is yourselves, and not me, that you injure, by bringing yourselves into this bondage to the ceremonial law, to the loss of your Christian liberty. *Be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all*." Learn from St. Paul's example, That though the ministers of Christ may, and sometimes must, use severity and sharpness in the rebukes and reproofs which they give for sin, yet must they temper severity with gentleness; and insinuations of kindness and affection must be mingled with rebukes; as looking not so much at what their sin deserveth, as what is most convenient for bringing them to repentance. *Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am*. Learn, 2. That when the ministers of God, from a true zeal for the glory of God, do rebuke sin, and reprove sinners, the people are too apt to apprehend that our zeal flows from a private spirit of revenge, as if we had some particular displeasure against their persons, for some

personal injury done unto ourselves; all which groundless suspicions it is our duty to labour to wipe off. So doth our apostle here; *Ye have not injured me at all*, says he.

13 Ye know how, through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected: but received me as an angel of God, *even as Christ Jesus*. 15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it *had been possible*, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

Observe here, 1. A singular instance which St. Paul gives of his sincere affection towards these Galatians: *he preached the gospel to them at first*, and this both with difficulty and anger, *through the infirmity of the flesh*; that is, through much bodily weakness and imperfection. The ancients say St. Paul was a little man, and had some deformity, or crookedness of body, and imperfection in his utterance, which rendered both his person and speech contemptible. These bodily infirmities he calls a *temptation*; intimating, that the afflictions of the body are great temptations to the soul. And besides these bodily infirmities, he encountered also with persecutions in preaching the gospel to them; which were evidences and convincing demonstrations of his fervent love and affectionate regard towards them: *Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel to you at the first*.

Observe, 2. The reciprocal returns of love and affection which the Galatians made to St. Paul, at his first coming among them to preach the gospel: they received him as an angel of God, or as a messenger from God sent unto them, yea, as Jesus Christ, as if Christ himself had been there in person, and preached to them. Nay, so warm were their affections then to St. Paul, at his first coming among them, that they did not only open their purses, but, had it been possible for them, or profitable to him, they could even have plucked out their very eyes for him. But, note, it was at his first coming amongst them, and preaching to them. Whence we may observe, That the first year of a minister's preaching to and amongst a people, are usually most successful. Then our people's affections are warmest, and perhaps our own too; our people then hear us without any kind of prejudice against us, with great desire and

delight; afterwards their affections cool, either through their own inconstancy, or our inadvertency, or by the malice of Satan, or by the mischievous designs and misrepresentations of some of his instruments. Observe farther, That the love and reverence which people owe to their ministers should not be verbal and in profession only, but real and in sincerity; they ought to part with what is dear to them, to promote the work of God in their houses. There was a time when these Galatians could have given all they had to the apostle; money out of their purse, bread from their table, yea, blood out of their veins, and the very eyes out of their head: *I bear you record, that ye would even have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me*. Learn lastly, That it is an high commendation to a people, when neither poverty nor deformity, nor any deficiency which may render a minister of the gospel base and contemptible in the estimation of the world, can possibly diminish any thing of that respect which they know to be due and payable unto him. Notwithstanding the Galatians *knew the infirmities and temptations of the apostle, yet they received him (at first) as an angel of God*.

16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

As if the apostle had said, "How comes your affections, which were so warm at first, to be so cold now? Whence is it that I, who was formerly so precious in your esteem, am now looked upon as an enemy, and only because I declare the truth of God unto you? Can any reason be given on my part for this sudden change of affection on your part? I trow not, unless you count my candour and ingenuousness in telling the truth a crime: *Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*" Learn hence, That notwithstanding the faithful ministers of Christ, in reproving sin, and vindicating the truths of God, are sometimes counted and treated as enemies, yet will they persist, and finally persevere in their duty, whatever the event may be; though the world account them their enemy, yet they will tell them the truth.

17 They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

They, that is, the false apostles, pretend great love to you, and zealous affection for you; *but not well*, not upon honest and just grounds. There is often an ill cause, which is to be condemned and avoided;

zeal is a mixed affection of love and anger, working into a fervency of mind, in defending what we believe to be true and good, and in opposing what we judge to be false and bad; *They zealously affect you, but not well.* Nothing is more common, and consequently more dangerous, than for heretical teachers to pretend great zeal for the glory of God, and great love and affection to the people of God, whilst they are about to persuade them to embrace their pernicious errors, and damnable heresies. He adds, *Yea, they would exclude you, that you might affect them.* Exclude you, that is, from the liberty and privileges of the gospel, say some; from depending upon me, or any faithful pastor, say others; they would ingratiate themselves, that they may engross you, and you may affect them only. The old practice has ever been amongst seducers, first to alienate the people's minds from their own teachers, and next get themselves looked upon as alone and only worthy to have room in the people's hearts and affections: *They would exclude you from us, and us from you, only that you might affect them.*

18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

Note here, That although there is a zeal in a bad cause, which is to be condemned and avoided, yet there is a zeal in a just and righteous cause, which is so laudable and worthy to be practised; when it is a zeal guided by religion, governed by prudence, attended with perseverance; when in a good thing we are affected, zealously affected, and zealously affected always. This the apostle desires that the Galatians should be, and that as well when he was absent from them, as when he was present with them.

19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.

Observe here, 1. The endearing title which the apostle gives to the apostatizing Galatians: he calls them *children, little children, his little children—My little children.* Note, he calls them *children*, because converted to Christianity by the preaching of the gospel; and being thus regenerate and born again, they were to be as children, innocent and inoffensive. He calls them *little children*, to denote the tenderness of their growth in Christianity, the smallness of their proficiency in religion; they were not come to that consistency in grace, that maturity in goodness, to that per-

fection in knowledge which he did desire. Farther, he calls them *his little children*, to denote that spiritual relation which was between them, he having been the undoubted instrument of their conversion, and so was their spiritual father; and also to denote that endearment of affection which he bare unto them, and that tender care and concern which he had for them. Observe, 2. The holy vehemency of the apostle's desire, how earnestly he longed after them in the bowels of Jesus Christ. He compares himself to a mother in travail, until he saw Christ formed in their hearts and lives. *I travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you.* Learn hence, That there is no stronger love, nor more endeared affection between any relations upon earth, than between such ministers of Christ and their beloved people, as they have been happily instrumental to convert and bring home to Christ. Learn, 2. That there is nothing in this world which the faithful ministers of Christ do so passionately desire and affectionately long after, as to see *Jesus Christ formed* and fashioned in the hearts and lives of their beloved people: *My little children, of whom I travail in birth, &c.*

20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice: for I stand in doubt of you.

Our apostle, as a farther testimony of his endeared affections towards the Galatians, declares here his earnest desire to have been with them, and see them face to face, that so being more fully acquainted with their case, he might know how to suit his discourse to them, and might have more cause of rejoicing with, than complaining of them. Learn hence, 1. That though a minister may sometimes necessarily withdraw himself from his flock, yet he ought always to have a fervent desire to be present with them, without neglecting any opportunity, when occasion offereth, of returning to them: *I desire to be present with you.* Learn, 2. That it is a minister's duty to get, as much as may be, the exact knowledge of his people's inclinations and dispositions, of their state and condition, that he may know how to make a fit application to all of them, admonishing and reproving some, threatening and correcting others. Thus the apostle here wished to be present with them, *that he might change his voice*; that is, know the better how to speak most suitably and seasonably to their condition. *I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice.*

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be

under the law, do ye not hear the law? 22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free-woman. 23 But he *who was* of the bond-woman was born after the flesh; but he of the free-woman was by promise.

Our apostle here proceeds to the end of this chapter, in showing the Galatians that it was the design of God, at the coming of Christ, to abolish the legal dispensation, and free men from the servitude and bondage of that law. And, first, he argues with them from the nature of the law they were so willing, yea, so desirous, to be under, *ver. 21. Ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?* That is, "Ye that desire to be justified by your legal performances, by observing circumcision, &c. do you not hear and take notice how the very law itself doth sentence, curse, and condemn you? And do you not find in the Old Testament, the story of Sarah and Hagar, of Ishmael and Isaac? Are you ignorant that Abraham had two sons, Ishmael by Hagar the bond-woman, and Isaac by Sarah the free-woman? Ishmael the bond-woman's son was born after the flesh; that is, by the ordinary strength of nature in generation, Hagar being young, and Abraham being strong. But Isaac was the son of the promise; God gave him, by virtue of his promise made to Abraham when his body was dead, unfit for generation, and Sarah past conception also." Now from this history of Abraham's family, considered in itself, (without the mystery prefigured by it,) we learn, 1. That the best of men are imperfect men; the holy patriarchs lived in the sin of polygamy, or taking more wives than one, contrary to the first institution of marriage, either not knowing or not considering it was a sin. *Abraham had two wives.* Learn, 2. That the truth and veracity of God engages him to fulfil and make good all his promises, though all ordinary means and secondary causes fail, and become impotent and unable to bring about the thing promised. Thus here, a promise being made to Abraham, that Sarah should have a child, she conceiveth and beareth Isaac; not according to the course of nature, but through virtue of the promise: *He of the free-woman was by promise.*

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. 25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Ara-

bia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Here the apostle makes an allegorical and spiritual application of the foregoing history of Sarah and Hagar, of Isaac and Ishmael; and the mystery he tells us is this, "The two mothers, Sarah and Hagar, are types of the two covenants, the one of works, the other of grace; the two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, are a type of two sorts of men living in the church, the one proceeding from the first, the other from the second covenant; the one regenerate, the other unregenerate men. All regenerate men are under the covenant of grace, and freemen; for every man's freedom depends upon the covenant under which he stands. Ishmael is the son of the bond-woman, and points at Jerusalem which then was, and the people of the Jews, as they then stood affected, seeking justification, and expecting eternal salvation, by the works of the law; but now behold in Isaac, a son of the free-woman, an emblem of the gospel church, which dares not depend upon the righteousness of the law for justification, but relies upon the meritorious righteousness of the Mediator; and this points out Jerusalem above, *which is free, and the mother of us all.* Learn hence, That all unregenerate men, who continue in a state of nature, are under the first covenant, or covenant of works. Ishmael is a type of all unregenerate men. Mankind is bound to God by a double bond: First, by a bond of creation: secondly, by a bond of stipulation. The one is a natural, and the other is a voluntary, obligation; by the former we are bound to God, by the latter he is bound to us. The covenant made with man in his state of innocency, was *Fœdus Amicitie*, a covenant of friendship; the covenant made with us since the fall, is *Fœdus Misericordie*, a covenant of reconciliation; the former made with the first Adam, the latter with Christ the second Adam. The first covenant was made not barely with the person, but with the nature of Adam, with the whole race of mankind; for God dealt with Adam, not as a single person, but as *Caput Gentis*, as the root and representative of mankind; and, consequently, this covenant was not abolished by the fall, but stands still in force; not to give life, because it is become weak through our flesh: we are become weak to that, not that weak to us; but it commands duty as it did before, namely, perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience;

and, in case of failure, denounces the curse. Lord! awaken every natural and unregenerate man, who, bearing only Adam's image, is also under Adam's covenant; he is a bond-man now, as was Ishmael of old, in bondage to sin, in bondage to Satan, in bondage to the law, in bondage to his own fears, in bondage to the world. O rest not, till by grace you are delivered from this bondage, by being translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and heartily submitted to the terms and conditions of the second covenant, which propoundeth repentance, and promiseth pardon and acceptance upon repentance!

27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Our apostle here proceeds, and still goes on in his former allegory: the church of the Gentiles he compares to Sarah, who was a long time barren, but at last brought forth a child of the promise, a seed in which all the families of the earth were blessed. The church of the Jews is represented under the notion of a woman who had an husband and many children; but the barren Gentiles are, by a spirit of prophecy, called upon to rejoice, and shout for joy, because there should be more children brought forth to God amongst them, than were amongst the Jews. Here and hence observe, That it is not the church's lot to be always alike fruitful in bringing forth children unto God; she hath her barren times, in which the labours of her ministers are attended with little success, and few are converted and brought home to God: in the first beginnings of the Christian church, though Christ himself was the preacher, she was one that beareth not, and travaileth not. Learn, 2. That upon the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, and the weakening of Satan's interest in the world, when souls are gathered in, and brought home to Christ; by the power of converting grace, all the churches of Christ ought to rejoice, and break forth into singing, as being matter of exceeding joy and great exultation: *Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth into singing, &c.*

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. **29** But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

In the former of these two verses the

apostle applies the foregoing allegory, or typical history of Sarah and Hagar, thus: "As, says he, Isaac by virtue of the promise, being born of the free-woman, was heir to all his father's estate; in like manner, they who seek salvation not by the law, but by faith in Christ, are the free children of God, and heirs of the promise of life eternal: *We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise.*" In the latter of these two verses, which gives us an account of the persecuting enmity that was in the heart and tongue of Ishmael against Isaac, we have several things observable. As, 1. The root and rise of Ishmael's persecuting malice discovered, and whence it proceeded; and that was an inward antipathy to the work of grace in Isaac. Those great differences in divine heraldry, of being born after the flesh, and after the Spirit, evidently discover where the quarrel lay, and whence it arose; it was the spiritualness of Isaac that exasperated Ishmael's rage. Isaac was born after the Spirit, and doubtless he showed some fruits of the Spirit which Ishmael could not relish, and therefore did deride and mock him. Observe, 2. What was the kind of persecution which Isaac underwent; it was the persecution of the tongue, in derisions and cruel mockings; Moses tells us, in the book of *Genesis*, the manner how, and the weapon with which. Ishmael did not lift up his hand against Isaac, as Cain did against Abel, but his tongue only; yet St. Paul calls it here persecution. Mocking and scoffing either at the word, ways, or people of God, is a sin of unspeakable profaneness, a blaspheming of Christ, and a persecution of his members. *He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.* Observe, 3. That the persecution of the tongue, at least, is that which the children and church of God have met with in all former, and must expect to meet with in future ages: *As it was then, says the apostle, even so it is now; afflictions are the donatives of the gospel, and persecution is the church's patrimony: To us it is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but to suffer, Phil. i. 29.* Observe lastly, From Ishmael's being brother to Isaac, and yet his bitter persecutor, that the sorest trials and sharpest persecutions which the saints endure, are very often from the nearest relations, who are tied to them by the strongest obligations either of kindred or acquaintance. Bitterest things are sometimes endured from the hands of those from whom better things might justly have been expected. Christ foretold all this, *The brother shall betray the brother to death,*

and the father the son. Cain is dead, but the spirit of Cain yet lives; they that scoff, would bite, and make their teeth meet, had they power to use their cheekbone; he that is born after the flesh, will persecute those of his own flesh and family that are born after the Spirit; as it was then, we may go on to say, even so it is now.

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman.

The apostle goes on in explaining and applying this typical history of Ishmael and Isaac, and tells us, that the casting out of Ishmael the son of Hagar the bond-woman, did typify the exclusion of the law from a partnership with the gospel in the justification of a sinner before God. As Ishmael was cast out of Abraham's family, and none but Isaac must inherit; so they that depend upon the law for justification, shall be cast out of the church of God, and never attain the heavenly inheritance. But they who depend upon the promise of God, and expect to be justified by faith, without legal performances, they only shall be heirs of grace and mercy. The doctrine of justification by the works of the law, when it is not only doctrinally maintained, but practically pursued and walked in, doth exclude persons from having any part or share in the kingdom of heaven. So much was typified and prefigured by the son of the bond-woman being cast out, and not allowed to be heir with the son of the free-woman.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.

Here the apostle draws a conclusion from the foregoing discourse, thus: "As Sarah cast out Hagar and Ishmael, so must the children of the New Jerusalem cast out the law, and all the legal rites, henceforth to be observed no more, either alone without Christ, or in conjunction with Christ. And as the church of the Gentiles was not typified in Hagar, but in Sarah, so we the Christian Gentiles are not obliged to judaical observances, but freed entirely by Christ from them, and justified by gospel grace without them." The conclusion and sum of all is this, to bring off the Galatians from seeking justification by the works of the law, and to apprehend themselves no longer in bondage to circumcision and the Mosaic rites, but to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath

made them free: which introduces that excellent discourse to this purpose which we find contained in the next chapter.

CHAP. V.

Our apostle having in the foregoing chapters clearly asserted and strenuously proved the doctrine of free justification by faith, without the works of the law, and that circumcision, and the ceremonial rites, were all certainly abolished by the death of Christ; he comes now (as his manner was) to improve his discourse by way of application to them; and this he doth both for the informing of their judgments, and directing of their practice. And the first duty he exhorts the Galatians to, is, to persist and stand fast in their Christian liberty, which Christ by his death had purchased for them, and to be no longer in bondage to circumcision, and the ceremonial law. Accordingly he thus bespeaks them, ver. 1.

STAND fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

As if he had said "Since Christ by his death had purchased our freedom from the yoke and bondage of the ceremonial law, let us resolutely stand fast in this our Christian liberty, without subjecting ourselves again to circumcision, and the observance of the Mosaic rites."—Here note, 1. The servile condition of the Jewish church: they were under *bondage*, under a *yoke of bondage*. This servitude of theirs consisted in the vast number of their religious rites and observances, as to days and weeks, months, and years; in the multitude of their sacrifices of all sorts, which they were obliged every day to offer: in their frequent purifications and washings; in the strict distinctions they were obliged to make between clean and unclean meats; in the numerous rites and ceremonies they are required to observe at their marriages and burials, at bed and board, at home and abroad, nay, even in plowing, sowing, and reaping; so numerous were these observances, that they took up half their time, and were as burdensome as they were numerous. Well might the apostle here call it a *yoke of bondage*, and elsewhere, viz. Acts xv. 10. a *yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear*. Note, 2. The happy liberty and freedom from this intolerable yoke, purchased by Christ for the Christian church: *Christ hath made us free*. He by his obedience and death, has purchased this happy freedom for us, a freedom from ceremonial bondage, from sinful servitude and slavery; not from civil subjection, not from the yoke of new obedience, but from the obliging force of the ceremonial law, and the curse and irritating power of the moral law. Note, 3. The Christians' duty, with reference to this privilege, namely, to

stand fast in the liberty which Christ has purchased for them, without obliging themselves to observe any part of the ceremonial law, which was now a servility perfectly unprofitable, and nothing else: *stand fast in it*; that is, maintain and defend it both in judgment and practice.

2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, That if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

That is, "Behold, I Paul, your apostle, do positively declare, and expressly tell you, the Galatians, and all other Christians converted by me to Christianity, that if ye be circumcised, that is, join circumcision with the gospel as a thing necessary to justification and salvation, Christ's undertaking will profit you nothing; for embracing circumcision after Christ's coming, is virtually to deny and disown that he is come, and in effect to renounce and disclaim him; because at his coming the promise was fulfilled, and circumcision of its own nature ceased." Learn hence, That for persons religiously to observe any of the rites of the ceremonial law, in obedience to any divine precept, or to join any thing with Christ, and faith in him, for the justification of a sinner before God, is a plain denial of Christ, and a disdaining of his ability and sufficiency to justify and save us: *If ye be circumcised, verily, Christ shall profit you nothing.*

3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

He that urges the necessity of circumcision, is a debtor to the law, in a double respect, namely, in regard of duty, and in regard of penalty. First, he is a debtor in regard of duty; because he is that thinks himself bound to keep one part of the ceremonial law, circumcision, doth thereby oblige himself to keep the whole ceremonial law, yea, and the whole moral law too, without deficiency, and that under the penalty of condemnation. Again, Secondly, As he is a debtor in point of duty, so he must needs be a debtor in regard of penalty; because he is not able to keep any part of it perfectly. Hence we may infer, 1. How endearing our obligations are to Christ, who as our Surety paid both these debts for us, namely, our debt of duty, and our debt of penalty to the law of God: by fulfilling all righteousness, he paid our debt of duty, and by suffering the punishment due to transgressors, he paid our debt of penalty. We may also, infer, 2. That as he that is circumcised, is bound to keep the whole law; so he that is baptized, is

obliged to obey all the commands of the gospel, to make conscience of the duties of both tables, as an argument of his sincerity, and as an ornament to his profession.

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Here another argument is used, to show that believers are dead to the ceremonial law, and are by no means to expect justification by it: *Whosoever of you says the apostle is justified by the law*, that is, whosoever seeks and endeavours to be so justified, (for in reality none can in that manner be justified,) *Christ is become of no effect unto such persons*; that is, they renounce Christ, and disdain benefit by his death. And they are fallen from grace; that is, fallen from Christianity, and the covenant of grace; they have forfeited the grace of the gospel, by cleaving to the ceremonial law, they are fallen from the doctrine of grace delivered in the gospel, and Christ is become of no effect unto them. Learn from hence, That such persons as do believe that faith in Christ alone is not sufficient to justification and acceptance with God, without the observation of the abrogated law, do in effect disown their relation to Christ, and disclaim all benefit by his death: *Christ is become of none effect, &c.*

5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

That is, "We Christians, we believers, through the Spirit which we have received, and not by legal observances, do hope both for such a righteousness as will denominate and constitute us righteous in the sight of God, and also for the crown of righteousness in heaven, which now we wait and hope for here on earth." Note, 1. That a believer does not value himself by what he has in hand, but by what he has in hope; his riches are not so much in present possession, as in future expectation: *We wait for the hope*: that is, for heaven, the good hoped for. Note, 2. That none have either right to heaven, or can warrantably expect the enjoyments of heaven, who are destitute of righteousness; heaven is here called the *hope of righteousness*, that is, the rational hope and expectation of righteous persons only. Note, 3. That it is a righteousness made ours by faith, even the righteousness of the Mediator, which gives us the best title to, and the firmest ground to hope and wait for, the kingdom of heaven and eternal life. Note, 4. That it is the special work of the Holy Spirit to

produce in us the graces of the Spirit, both faith and hope; faith to enable us to apprehend, and hope to enable us to wait for, the crown of righteousness, even eternal glory: *We through the Spirit do wait for the hope of righteousness by faith?*

6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

In Christ Jesus, that is, in the economy of Christ Jesus, under the gospel dispensation, in our state of Christianity, since Christ's manifestation in the flesh, *neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing* with God, as to our acceptance with him, or reward from him: but the qualification now necessary to salvation under the gospel, is faith working by love; that is, such an effectual belief of future happiness purchased for us, and promised to us by Christ, as causes us to love and serve him, to trust in and depend upon him for the same. Learn, 1. That although circumcision, and the rest of the Levitical ceremonies, were once enjoined by God, and practised by the Jews as an acceptable service, and the neglect or contempt of them was a mortal sin; yet since Christ's coming in the flesh, who was the substance of all those shadows, the command whereby they were enjoined did cease, and *neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avail any thing* to salvation. Learn, 2. That though the ceremonial law be abolished, yet a believer under the gospel has work to do, a work of faith, and labour of love; for though faith alone justifieth us before God, yet it is not alone in the heart when it doth justify, but is always accompanied with the grace of love to God and our neighbour; *For in Christ Jesus no faith availeth any thing, but that which worketh by love.*

7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?

Ye did run well; that is, in the race of Christianity; you set out well at first, and received the gospel in the plainness and simplicity of it, without any mixture of Jewish ceremonies: What hindered you? who stopt you? who drove you back from your belief of, and obedience to, the truth of the gospel, which you then received from me? Here note, 1. With what holy wisdom our apostle mixes commendations with his reproofs: at the same time that he reproves them for their present backsliding, he commends them for their former forwardness; *Ye did run well.* Note, 2.

That ordinarily a Christian's first ways are his best ways, his first fruits his fairest fruits: *Jehoshaphat walked in the first ways of David his father*, 2 Chron. xlvii. 3. Commonly young converts are carried out with a greater measure of affection and zeal, and make a swifter progress in religion, than others do, at first, or they themselves do afterward when they are of older standing. These Galatians did run, yea, did run very well at first in the race of Christianity. Note, 3. That when a person's or a people's progress in Christianity is not answerable to their hopeful beginnings, it is matter of regret and grief to all beholders, as well as matter of reproach and shame to the persons themselves: *Ye did run well; who did hinder you?* Intimating, that this their defection and apostasy was no less matter of astonishment to St. Paul, than it was of rebuke and reproach to them.

8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. 9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

As if the apostle had said, "this judaizing opinion and practice of yours, this persuasion of the necessity of your being circumcised, and obeying the law of Moses; this new doctrine, so contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and the design of Christianity; was never taught you either by God or myself, or any other faithful minister of Jesus Christ, who first converted you to the faith; but it is a mere delusion of Satan, and his emissaries the false apostles: and do not think this a small matter: let not circumcision seem a little thing to you; and let not these judaizing teachers be disregarded by you as inconsiderable, because they are few in number, for they are like to leaven; and ye know very well that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump; intimating, that a few false teachers, and a little of error and false doctrine, crept into the congregation and church of Christ, may do unspeakable mischief by speedily infecting the whole church, as a little leaven (10 error is compared) leaveneth the whole lump.

10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded; but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whose ever he be.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's holy confidence, grounded upon charity; that *through the Lord*, that is, through the Lord's assisting his endeavours, and through the Lord's blessing upon their serious consideration of what he had written to them.

they would be reclaimed from their errors, and brought to be of the same mind with himself. Where note, How the holy and zealous apostle was divided betwixt hope and fear concerning these men; he feared the worst of these Galatians, and yet hopes the best: *I have confidence in you through the Lord.* It is a fault in the ministers of the gospel, when they despair of men too soon, when they cease or slacken their endeavours for their people's good, looking upon them as resolutely bent upon, and judiciously given up unto, all evil. Though our apostle here had not a confidence of faith, or full persuasion, yet he had a confidence of charity, which caused him to hope, that they would be like-minded with himself: *I have confidence in you through the Lord, that you will be no otherwise minded.* Observe, 2. With what a holy caution, as well as Christian prudence and charity, our apostle applies himself unto them; declaring, that though he hoped they might be reclaimed from their error, yet, lest they should conclude their error not to be very dangerous, he shows them his just indignation against it, by denouncing deserved punishments against those that seduced them into it: *He that troubleth you, shall bear his own judgment,* his condemnation due to him in hell, without repentance, which is supposed in all threatenings. For the condition of conditional threatenings, though it is not always expressed, yet it is to be understood. Observe, 3. The universality of the threatening: *He shall bear his own judgment, whosoever he be:* let him be who he will, or what he will; who he will for abilities and parts, what he will for power or reputation; whoever he is, or whatsoever he be, he shall bear his judgment. Such is the exact justice of God, and such his impartiality in the exercise of it, that he will suffer no impenitent transgressor to escape his indignation, whoever he is, without respect of persons: *He that troubleth you shall bear his own judgment, whosoever he be.*

11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

Our apostle, in these words, signifies to us, that some of the judaizing teachers had suggested to the Galatians, as if he himself had preached elsewhere the doctrine of circumcision, and also practised the duty of circumcision, (by circumcising Timothy,) which here he opposes. "True, he did circumcise Timothy, but it was only to avoid offending the weak Jews, not out of

any opinion which he had touching the necessity of circumcision: therefore, to discover to them the falsehood of that suggestion, he declares, that if he would have preached circumcision, he might have escaped persecution; the Jews were his persecutors, looking upon him as an apostate from their holy religion, for preaching up the abolishment of the Mosaic law." Where observe, That the Jews, who looked upon themselves to be the people, yea, the peculiar and only people of God, and accounted all others contemptible and profane, were yet far greater persecutors of Christ and his apostles than the blind and barbarous Heathen, and all this out of zeal for God and his law: *Why do I yet suffer persecution?* implying, that the Jews did persecute him, and that his not preaching circumcision was the cause why they did so. He adds, *Then is the offence of the cross ceased.* By the cross, may be understood either, 1. The doctrine of the cross, the doctrine of the gospel; and then the sense is, the Jews would not have taken such offence at my preaching the doctrine of the gospel as they do, were it not because by it circumcision, and the whole frame of the old legal administration, are laid aside. Or else, 2. By the cross, may be understood the afflictions and sufferings which he underwent for the sake of Christ and his holy religion; and the sense then is, Verily, all my sufferings had long since been at an end, would I but have yielded the Jews this point, that Christians are obliged to circumcision, and to yield obedience to the law of Moses; would I grant them this, my sufferings would soon be at an end; but my daily persecutions are evident demonstrations that I do not preach up circumcision; for had I so done, the offences of the cross had long since ceased. Learn hence, That the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, will not, dare not, conceal any part of the necessary truth, when the imminent hazard of people's salvation calls for the preaching of it, though the embittered enemies of religion should raise against them the fiercest persecution for the same: *If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution?*

12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

The apostle's meaning is, "That it were very fit, were it seasonable, that those which had thus seduced them, should be excommunicated and cut off from the church's communion. Where note, 1. How implicitly and interpretatively St. Paul compares these seducers to rotten members, which are and ought to be cut

off, lest the gangrene overspread the whole body: *I would they were cut off*; implying, that like rotten members they deserved it, and the church's safety called for it, would her then circumstances admit of it. Note, 2. That in the very expression here used by St. Paul, of *cutting off*, there seems to be an allusion to the practice of circumcision, which is a cutting off the foreskin of the flesh, and throwing it away. Now, says the apostle, I wish that these judaizing teachers, that urge you to be circumcised, that is, to cut off and cast away the foreskin of your flesh, I wish that they might be cut off as superfluous flesh, and cast out of the fellowship and communion of the church. Yet, note, 3. The apostle doth rather declare what such seducers deserve, than actually inflict the censure itself; he satisfied himself with an affectionate wish, lest the number of the seduced being great, and perhaps the seducers not a few, they should be hardened rather than reformed, and the ordinance itself exposed; *I would they were even cut off*, &c.

13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Our apostle having finished the former part of the chapter, which contains an exhortation to stand fast in that liberty which Christ had purchased for them; he now enters upon the second part of it, namely, to caution them against abusing of their Christian liberty, and by no means to apprehend or suppose as if they were thereby freed from all obligation to serve God or man, in the duties particularly required of them. "Brethren, says he, ye are called unto liberty, that is, to the enjoyment of evangelical liberty, which consists in a freedom from the obligation of the ceremonial law, and the curse of the moral law: use it then so as not to abuse it; use it neither to sin nor scandal; not to sin, to allow yourselves the least liberty in indulging any carnal lust, or sinful affection, nor yet to scandalize the weak, who at present scruple the forsaking of circumcision, and the rest of the ceremonial rites; *Use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but in love serve one another*." Learn hence, 1. That our liberty and freedom, purchased for us by Christ, doth not dissolve any tie or obligation which we lie under either to God or man; the yoke of duty is very consistent with our Christian liberty. Learn, 2. That one of the great occasions of the sins we commit in the course of our lives, is the too free use of our Christian liberty: the using

our liberty to the utmost pitch and extent of that which we call lawful, is the occasion of our running into that which is certainly sinful. Religion most certainly allows us all reasonable liberty in the gratification of our natural appetites and passions; but all excesses and immoderate liberties are forbidden by religion. And accordingly one good rule for securing ourselves from falling into sin, in the using our Christian liberty, is this, namely, that in matters of duty, we should rather do too much than too little; but in matters of indifference, we should rather take too little of our liberty than too much. For instance, prayer and almsgiving are indispensable duties; but how oft we should pray, and how much we should give, is not positively declared; in this case to pray very frequently, and to give alms very liberally and largely, is our wisdom and duty; no damage will come by doing too much, but both damage and danger will accrue by doing too little. Learn, 3. That it is not sufficient, in order to the right use of our Christian liberty, that we do not from thence take occasion to sin ourselves: but we ought to take care, lest by any indiscreet use of our own liberty, we give offence, and minister occasion of sin and stumbling unto others. This truth is implied in the second injunction, *By love serve one another*.

14 For all the law is justified in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Here our apostle enforces the foregoing exhortation to love and serve one another, with a forcible argument or motive, namely, because love is the fulfilling of the law; that is, 1. It is the fulfilling of that part of the law which relates to our neighbour; all the moral law respecting our neighbour is fulfilled in that one word, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. Or, 2. Love may be said to be the fulfilling of the law in general; for true and regular love to our neighbour supposeth our love to God, springeth from it, and is an evidence of it; yea, the love of our neighbour is the perfecting and completing of our love to God, 1 John iv. 12. *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us*. Learn, That as love is a very comprehensive duty, comprising the inward affection as well as the outward action, so the word neighbour is of a very extensive consideration, and includes all persons, friend and foe, rich and poor, near and afar off; all that partake of humanity must be sharers in our charity: our inward affection and good-will must extend to all, though the

outward expressions of it can reach but a very few. Thus the law is fulfilled in one word, when we love our neighbour as ourselves: not as we do (often) love ourselves, but as we should love ourselves, namely, with a wise and well-guided love.

15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

The apostle, to enforce the foregoing exhortation to mutual love, urges here the dangerous effects which their animosities and strifes, with their controversies and contentions, would most certainly produce. By biting one another, says he, you will destroy and consume one another; where it deserves a serious remark, that St. Paul compares the enmities and animosities which were amongst them, upon the score of their differences in religion, to the bitings, rendings, and devourings, of wild beasts. *If ye bite and devour one another*; and gives them timely notice of the fatal mischiefs and consequences that will follow thereupon, namely, a total devastation and inevitable consumption of the whole church. *Take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.* It is a true saying, *Odia religionum sunt Acerbissima*, There is no such bitter hatred amongst men, as upon the score of religion. As the zeal of the Jews would not suffer an uncircumcised person to live amongst them, so probably these zealous judaizers in Galatia would not suffer those who had cast off legal observances to live quietly and peaceably by them; which might give occasion to these words of the apostle, *If ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another.* Learn hence, 1. That there ever have been, are, and will be, differences about matters of religion, in the best and purest churches here on earth. Learn, 2. That these differences may and ought to be managed with great temper and charity. Learn, 3. That then contentions are highly uncharitable, and very sinful, when men *bite and devour one another.* Learn, 4. That such uncharitable contentions do prepare and make ready a people for utter destruction; *If ye bite, &c.*

16 *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

*To prevent the fore-mentioned evils, as if the apostle had said, I advise and exhort you to walk in the Spirit, that is, according to the guidance and direction, according to the influence and motion, of the Holy Spirit speaking to you in his

word, and then you never will fulfil the lusts of the flesh; that is, you will never accomplish and bring into complete act (especially with deliberation and consent) the inordinate motions of corrupt nature." Learn hence, That the more Christians set themselves to obey the new nature, and follow the motions of the spirit of grace, the more will the power of indwelling sin and inbred corruption be mortified and kept under. This expression, *Ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh*, may be thought to import and imply these two things: 1. That an inward principle of grace in the heart will give a check to sin in its first motions, and cause it oft-times to miscarry in the womb, like an untimely birth, before it comes to its full maturity; it shall never gain the full consent of a gracious person's will, as it doth of an unregenerate person. 2. But if notwithstanding all the opposition grace makes to hinder the production of sin, if yet it doth break forth into act, such acts of sin are not committed without reluctance and regret, and are followed with shame and sorrow, yea, those very surprisals and captivities of sin at one time, are made cautions and warnings to prevent it at another time; and thus they that *walk in the Spirit, do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.*

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

These words are brought in as a special reason why Christians should walk in the Spirit, that is, after the motions and guidance of God's Holy Spirit: because otherwise the flesh will quickly prevail over them; for the flesh is continually lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; that is, the evil inclinations of corrupt nature are continually struggling with, and striving against, the good motions which the Holy Spirit of God stirreth up in us. And in like manner the Spirit, or renewed nature, opposes the motions of corrupt nature: for these two principles are contrary the one to the other; so that ye who are led by the Spirit, cannot act (with deliberation and consent) according to the flesh; nor can they that are led by the flesh, do the things which delight the Spirit. Learn hence, 1. That there is a diversity of principles in a Christian, flesh and spirit; there is a good principle, called spirit, because the Spirit of God is the author of it; and a bad principle in us, which is called flesh, by which we are

inclined to that which is evil. This is called flesh, to denote its intimacy with us; it is as near to us as our flesh, to denote its nearness to us; it is as dear to us as our own flesh, as dear as a right hand or right eye; and to denote its continuance with us, as long as we carry flesh about us, so long will this principle of corrupt nature remain in us and continue with us. Learn, 2. That the motions and inclinations in our nature to sin, do ever conflict and combat with, oppose and war against the motions of God's Holy Spirit, exciting and inclining us to good: though contraries cannot be together in the same subject in an intense, yet they may be together in a remiss, degree. Learn, 3. The consequence and issue of this combat: *We cannot do the things that we would*, nor any thing as we would; we cannot perform any holy duty perfectly in this life. As soon may an imperfect father beget a perfect child, as we, in our state of imperfection, perform any duty free from sin. O, what need, what great need then, have the best of saints of the mediation and intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ, when they present any performed duty unto God! And what need also to watch our own hearts when we are upon our knees, to fortify them against the incursions and disturbances of the flesh; seeing, after all our care and vigilance in duty, we can none of us do the things that we would, nor any thing as we should!

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

That is, "If ye be under the guidance and government of the Holy Spirit of God, and that renewing principle of grace which he has produced in you, you are no longer under the law; that is, not under the moral law as a covenant of life for our justification, though under it as an eternal rule of living; not under the vindictive, though under the directive power of the law." So that the force of the apostle's argument seems to lie thus: "You are by the Spirit, by the spiritual dispensation of the gospel, free from the curse and terror of the moral law; how unreasonable then is it to suppose, that you should be still subject to the ceremonial law! No; if you should be led by the Spirit, neither the moral law shall condemn you, nor the ceremonial law oblige and bind you."

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest; which are *these*; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife,

seditions, heresies. 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Our apostle having in the foregoing verses exhorted the Galatians to walk in the Spirit, to be led and guided by the Spirit, and by no means to obey or fulfil the lusts of the flesh; he comes in these and the following verses, to discover how they might with certainty and assurance know whether they were spiritual or carnal, whether the Spirit or the flesh had a prevalency in them, or dominion over them. Accordingly, he describes particularly the flesh and the Spirit, by their various and different effects, and gives us a catalogue of the one and the other; he reckons up no fewer than seventeen works of the flesh, all which, yea, any of which, continued in, and unrepented of, are damnable; after this he enumerates nine special and gracious fruits of the Spirit, which qualify us for, and entitle us to the kingdom of heaven; *The works of the flesh are manifest, &c.* Here observe, 1. That sin is called a *work*; thereby intimating to us the labour and toil, the drudgery and pains, which sinners meet with in a sinful course. The ways of sin are very toilsome, although in their issue very unfruitful; sin is no pleasurable service, but a laborious servitude. Observe, 2. The apostle calls sin by the name of works, in the plural number, *The works of the flesh*: intimating that sin never goes single, but has a dangerous train and retinue: he that yields himself a servant to one sin, shall soon find himself a slave to many. Observe, 3. That sin is called a *work of the flesh*, because most sins are committed by the flesh; the body is the soul's instrument, as well in the work of sin, as in the service of Christ; and the flesh is the object, about which these works are conversant, as well as the organ and instrument by which they are committed. Observe, 4. These works of the flesh are here said to be manifest; but how so? First, They are most of them manifestly condemned by the light of nature; the natural conscience in men startles at them at first, till by custom and frequent practice they become habitual and natural to them. Secondly, They are all of them manifest by the light of scripture; the word of God, which is in all our hands, condemns all these works of the flesh to the pit of hell. Observe, 5. The particular enumeration of the works of the flesh,

here made by the apostle: *Adultery*, or the defiling our neighbour's bed: *Fornication*, or the unlawful mixture of single persons one with another: *Uncleaness*, under which is comprehended all sorts of filthiness, and filthy lusts, whether natural or unnatural: *Lasciviousness*, by which is meant all wanton behaviour, either in speech or action, tending to excite filthy desires, either in themselves or others: *Idolatry*, whereby God is represented to corporal eyes by pictures and images, and so brought down to human senses; properly therefore is idolatry, as such, called here a work of the flesh. Again, *Witchcraft*, a devilish art, whereby some men and women, having made a compact with the devil, either expressly or implicitly, are enabled, with God's permission, and by the assistance of Satan, to produce effects beyond the ordinary course and order of nature, and these for the most part rather mischievous to others, than beneficial to themselves: *Hatred*, or a secret enmity in our hearts against our neighbour, either for real or apprehended injuries: *Variance*, or outward contention by word or actions, arising from the fore-mentioned enmity in the heart: *Emulations*, or an inward grief and displeasure at some good in others, or done by others, which eclipses and overshadows us: *Wrath*, or violent anger, and immoderate passion, depriving a man for a time of his reason, and transforming him into a beast: *Strife*, or a litigious spirit, a continual proneness to quarrelling and contending: *Seditious*, or rending of societies into factions, and dividing communities into parties: which dividing work, when it falls out in the state, is called sedition; when in the church, by the name of schism: *Heresies*, or dangerous errors in the fundamental points of religion; not arising purely from mistakes of judgment, but from the espousing of false doctrines out of disgust or pride, or from worldly principles, to avoid persecution or trouble in the flesh; these may well be accounted carnal lusts, and called works of the flesh, although they be mental errors, and their first seat is in the understanding and judgment: *Envyings*, a pestilent lust, which makes another's good our grief; our eyes smart at the sight of what another enjoys, though we have never the less, because another has more: *Murders*, that is, the executing of private revenge by shedding of blood, and taking away our neighbour's life unjustly: *Drunkenness*, *Rebellings*; the one is intemperance in drinking, the other an excess in eating; all sinful abuse of the creatures of God, which he has given, not

barely for necessity, but delight, is censured here as a work of the flesh. Observe, 6. The solemn warning which the apostle gives the Galatians to watch against all these sins, and not indulge or allow themselves in the wilful commission of any one of them: *I tell you*, says he, *that such shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, but be eternally banished from him. Now from the whole, learn, 1. That the ministers of the gospel must not satisfy themselves barely to reprove and condemn sin in general, but must descend to particulars: though invectives against sin, at large, are of good use to expose the deformity of sin, yet, in order to the awakening of particular sinners, we must take into our consideration their particular sins, and endeavour to convince them of them, and turn them from them; so doth our apostle here in the foregoing catalogue of vices. Learn, 2. That the ministers of Christ must acquaint their people, not only with the danger of allowing themselves in the grosser acts of sin, as adultery, fornication and drunkenness, and revellings, and such like, but also with the danger of indulging themselves in secret sins, heart sins, sins which the eye of the world can never accuse them of, but God will condemn them for; such are hatred, emulation, envy, &c. not only the outward act of sin, but the inward desire, is dangerous and damning. It is easy for a man to murder his neighbour, in the account of God, by a secret wish, and a passionate desire: he that hateth his brother is a murderer, and he that looks upon a woman unduly is an adulterer in the sight of God. Learn, 3. That the ministers of Christ can never often enough warn sinners of the danger of sin, and continuance in it; we must do it over and over again; every sabbath, and every sermon, must ring a peal in the sinner's ears of the fatal danger of a resolute impiety. Thus here, *I tell you now*, as *I told you in time past*, *that they which do such things shall not inherit, &c.*

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Observe here, 1. That the apostle, who called *sin* the work of the flesh, doth here call *grace* the fruit of the Spirit. Sin is a work of our own; it proceeds wholly from ourselves, our own depraved minds and wills, without the least co-operation of the Holy Spirit; he can neither be the author nor abettor of any thing that is evil. All sinful works are works of the flesh, and

therefore our own works; but all graces accompanying salvation, are the fruit of God's Spirit; both because he is the author of them, and also because they are so acceptable and pleasing to him, even as fruit is unto our taste, and likewise so profitable and advantageous to ourselves.—Where the flesh ruleth, there the work exceeds the fruit; and accordingly, without any mentioning of the fruit, they are called works of the flesh: but where the Spirit of God ruleth, there the fruit exceeds the work; and therefore, without ever mentioning the work, it is called the fruit of the Spirit. Observe, 2. That the works of the flesh are spoken of as many; but the fruit of the Spirit is spoken of as one; many works, but one fruit. There is such a connection and concatenation of graces, that although they are distinct in their natures, yet are they inseparable in their subject; pull one link of a chain, and you pull all: so he that has any one spiritual grace in reality, or at least in eminency, cannot be utterly destitute of any other; for where the Holy Spirit is, there cannot be a total defect of any holy grace. Observe, 3. That the works of the flesh are said to be manifest, ver. 19. but no such thing is here affirmed of the fruit of the Spirit. Alas! God knows, the works of the flesh are but every where too manifest; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, drunkenness, do so abound in all places, that you can scarce look beside them. But the fruits of the Spirit are not so: love, peace, gentleness, meekness, these are very thin in the world; hips and haws grow in every hedge, when choicer fruits are but in some few gardens. Observe, 4. How St. Paul enumerates here nine special fruits of the Spirit; not as if there were no more, but because these here mentioned stand in a direct opposition to the former vices recited in the foregoing verses. The first sweet fruit of the Spirit taken notice of here by our apostle, is *Love*: an holy affection in the soul, whereby a person is carried forth to love God, primarily and chiefly for himself, and his neighbour for God's sake: *Joy*, delight in doing our duty, and rejoicing in expectation of the reward for well-doing: *Peace*, inward peace with God and conscience, and outward peace with one another; *Long-suffering*, an inclination of mind disposing us to bear injuries patiently, and to forgive them readily: *Gentleness*, or affability and courtesy in conversation, a sweetness of temper which renders us greatly useful, as well as exceedingly delightful, to mankind: *Goodness*, a disposition inclining us to communicate what we have and are to

others, and to do all the possible good we can in our respective places and stations: *Faith*, or fidelity towards men, in our promises and in all our actions, speaking exact truth: *Meekness*, this is threefold, a natural meekness, which is the product of the temperament of the humours in the body, a rare felicity; there is also a moral meekness, which is the product of education and counsel, this is an amiable virtue; and there is a spiritual meekness, that orders the persons according to the divine rule, the holy law of God; this is a noble and divine grace, which attracts the estimation of God, and the admiration of men. *Temperance*, a sober use of meat, drink, and every thing wherein our senses are gratified or delighted. Observe, 5. A special privilege belonging to all those who are possessed of the forementioned fruits of the Spirit, and that is, exemption from the law; *Against such there is no law*; that is, no law to compel, no law to accuse or condemn them; for the law enjoins them, and encourages the practice and performance of them. Learn hence, 1. That the best, yea, the only way to have the fruits of the Spirit thrive in our hearts, is first to mortify the works of the flesh; weeds and thistles must be rooted up before grain can grow or thrive. As the corruption of one form is the production of another, so the mortification of sin makes way for the plantation of the fruits of the Spirit. Learn, 2. That moral virtues are the fruits of the Spirit, and commence Christian graces when they are acted by faith in Christ, influenced by love unto him, and aiming at the highest of ends, the glory of God, and our own salvation. Learn, 3. That if we compare the fruits of the Spirit with the works of the flesh, there will appear so much beauty in the one, and such real deformity in the other, so much satisfaction in the one, and such disquiet and vexation in the other, that besides the difference between them in their original and event, the former considerations are abundantly sufficient to engage our love to the fruits of the Spirit, and to excite our hatred to the works of the flesh.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

They that are Christ's; that is, they that are truly his followers, and sincere disciples, they *have crucified*, that is, subdued, and in some degree mortified and put to death, their fleshly corruptions, their carnal lusts, and sinful affections and passions. They did, by baptism, engage themselves to die unto sin; and the regenerate have done it

in some measure: that *have crucified the flesh*; yet we must not understand this of a total, plenary, and final crucifixion, but inchoative only; and they are said to have done it, because they are daily doing of it, *in proposito, voto, et consilio*, in resolution, in desire, and endeavour. And by *affections*, we are not to understand natural, but inordinate, affections; and by *crucifixion*, is not to be understood a total extinction of sin, but a deposing of it from its regency and dominion in the soul of the sinner; yet as death surely, though slowly, follows crucifixion, so likewise doth sin live in a believer a dying life, and dies a lingering, but a certain, death; *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts*. Learn hence, 2. That there are a peculiar people which are Christ's, that have special interest in him, union and communion with him; *They that are Christ's*, not by an external profession only, but by an internal implantation into him by faith. Learn, 2. That all such as thus have an interest in Christ, are daily crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. The death of sin is here compared to our Saviour's crucifixion; 1. To show the conformity there is betwixt the death of sin, and the death of Christ. Did Christ die a painful, shameful, lingering, and accursed, death? So dies sin in the soul of a believer. There is a gradual weakening of the power of sin in him; sin is dying, as he, but it is a long time a-dying. 2. To denote the principal mean and instrument of our mortification, namely, the death of Christ; by virtue whereof believers do crucify their corrupt affections; the great arguments to mortification being drawn from the sufferings of Christ for sin. Learn, 3. That the work of mortification, (called here, tropically, a crucifixion,) strikes not only at all sin, but at the root of all sins; it spares none, neither the flesh, nor any of its affections and lusts, do escape; root and branches, head and members; the old man is crucified, and the body of sin destroyed, and the axe of mortification laid to the root of every sin and sinful affection. In this manner do they that are Christ's crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

If we live in the Spirit, that is, if the Spirit lives in us, if the holy Spirit of grace be the principle of our life, *let us walk in the Spirit*: that is, let us live and act under the conduct and guidance, under the direction and influence, of the Holy Spirit; let us do the works of the Spirit, let us bring

forth the fruits of the Spirit, and let us live a spiritual life; let our dealings be about spiritual and heavenly things, and our chiefest delight be in such things; and by these spiritual delights and exercises we shall every day become more and more spiritual, and in the account of God be esteemed and reckoned amongst the number of those that walk in the Spirit. Let us then evidence the life of grace in ourselves, by exercising that grace in a life of communion with God. This seems to be the import of this remarkable place, *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*. Here we may note, That there must be a principle of spiritual life before there can be any spiritual motion and exercise; we must first live in the Spirit, and the Spirit live in us, before we can possibly walk in the Spirit: the child must live before it can walk. Note, 2. That when there is a principle of grace and spiritual life in the heart, there will be the actings and exercise of grace in the life: *If we live in the Spirit, we shall walk in the Spirit*. Ezek. xxxvi. 27. *I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes*. An holy heart will be attended with an holy life, and a good conscience accompanied with a good conversation; spiritual life will produce spiritual motion.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Our apostle closes this excellent chapter with an exhortation to the Galatians to avoid all pride and ambition, all vain-glorious boastings and contention, not provoking one another by their contentions, not envying either the gifts or graces of God bestowed on others. Learn hence, 1. That there is and may be in all men, a desire of applause and just commendation. All men pretend to a share in reputation, and do not love to see it monopolized and engrossed by any person. Learn, 2. That a vain-glorious desire of applause and reputation is sinful, when we seek for what we do not deserve, or for more than we deserve, or seek more to be applauded by men than to be approved by God. Learn, 3. That ambition is usually attended with envy and contention; no sin goes single, but has a train of followers; *Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another*.

CHAP. VI.

Our apostle, being now come to the concluding chapter of this excellent epistle to the Galatians, exhorts them to the practice of several important duties, in order to an holy life, which was so necessary to evidence the truth of their conversion

to Christianity; and so concludes his epistle with a solemn protestation of his sincere affection towards them.

BRETHREN, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

The first exhortation here given, is, how they should carry themselves one towards another, upon supposition of their scandalous falling either into error, or into sin, namely, not with rigour and severity, but with mildness and lenity; *If any be overtaken in a fault, &c.* Here note, 1. An evil supposed, namely, that the wisest, the holiest, and the best of men, may be overtaken in a fault, and surprised by a temptation: *If any man be overtaken*: implying that any man may be so: that sin, or that misery, which befalls some men, may befall others, any others, yea, all others; for all are partakers of the same frail nature, subject to the working of the same corruption, and liable to the danger of the same temptation. Note, 2. The duty directed to, with relation to these persons, who trip and fall either into sin, or into error; *Restore him*, set him right, put him in joint again; a metaphor taken from bone-setters, who place dislocated bones, and set broken bones with great tenderness. Those three things, which we say are necessary in a bone-setter, are absolutely needful in a reprover: namely, an eagle's eye, to discern where the fault lies; a lion's heart, to deal faithfully and freely with the faults; and a lady's hand to use them gently and tenderly. Note, 3. The persons particularly named, who are and ought to manage this duty of brotherly reproof, *Ye that are spiritual*: you that are the governors of the church, say some; you that are endowed with spiritual gifts, say others; the prophets among you, who perform all spiritual offices for you, let them rebuke offenders. Others, by *spiritual*, understand such as had received larger measures of the gifts and graces of the Spirit than others: *Let such as are strong bear with the infirmities of the weak.* Note, 4. The manner how this duty of fraternal correction, or brotherly reproof, is and ought to be managed, namely, with patience and meekness, not with severity and roughness: *Ye that are spiritual, restore him in the spirit of meekness*; if the reproofs you give others be embittered with your own passions, they will spit them out of their mouths; yea, spit them back upon your very faces. Note, 5. The argument to excite to all this, namely, the consideration of our own

personal frailty, and great liableness to fall into temptation ourselves, *Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* Who knows what a feather the strongest saint and stoutest Christian may prove in the wind of temptation! Therefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall, and exercise great candour and Christian tenderness towards them that are fallen before him. *Hodie mihi, cras tibi.* From the whole learn, 1. That fraternal correction, or brotherly reproof, is a great duty which Christians mutually owe one to another, when they either run into error, or fall into sin: *If any of you be overtaken, restore him.* Learn, 2. That although it be the duty of private Christians to admonish and reprove one another, as being members one of another, yet those that are *spiritual*, Christ's ministers, the guides of his church, the stewards of his household, ought in special to look upon it as their obliged duty to reprove and rebuke with all long-suffering and gentleness. Learn, 3. That rigour and severity, expressed towards the failings and escapes of others, will rather exasperate than reclaim them: we must deal as gently with a fallen brother as with a broken bone; if we do not temper our reproofs with meekness, they will certainly prove unsuccessful. Learn, 4. That the holiest saint or most spiritual man here on earth, is within the reach of temptation, and may possibly fall himself; therefore he ought to treat a fallen brother with great tenderness and regard.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

This is a general precept, and requires us to sympathize with our brethren in all their sorrows and sufferings, and to bear a part with them under the load and burden of oppressive wants and necessities; particularly, bearing with the weaknesses and infirmities of our brethren, seems here to be recommended to our care and practice in this apostolical injunction, *Bear ye one another's burdens.* The encouragement to which duty follows, *So shall we fulfil the law of Christ*; that is, the law of love, the moral law which enjoins us to love our neighbour as ourselves. But why is this called the law of Christ, when it was long before Christ; yea, before Moses, and as old as Adam himself, being part of the law of nature, which was written in Adam's heart before there was any written Bible? I answer, the law of love is very properly called the law of Christ; because he revived it, rescued it, recommended and enforced it, frequently urged it upon his followers, and exemplified it in his own life and conversation, therefore called a *new*

commandment, and his commandment: *This is my commandment, &c. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.* St. John xiii. 34. [See the Note there.] Learn hence, 1. That to have our ear, our heart, and our hand, open to our brethren in distress, is a necessary Christian duty: our ear open to their mournful complaints, our heart open to sympathize with and mourn over them, our hand open to the relief of their necessities and wants. This is a burden which the law of Christ has laid upon us; *Bear ye one another's burdens.* Learn, 2. To bear a part of our brethren's burdens with a compassionate heart and helping hand, is a fulfilling of the law of Christ; because much love, which is the fulfilling of the law, goes out, and is acted in the bearing of it; *so fulfil the law by Christ.*

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. 4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

The apostle is still directing the Galatians, and enforcing them to express great lenity and tenderness towards such of their brethren as had fallen into sin and error, and particularly cautions them, 1. To beware of the sin of pride and self-conceit, and to abound in the grace of humility and modesty; intimating to us, that pride, and an high opinion of ourselves, are the certain cause of censoriousness and rash judging of others, and the true reason why we despise and glory over an offending brother, instead of pitying of him, sympathizing with him, and endeavouring to restore him. *He that thinks himself to be something* here, is the man that hath proud thoughts of himself, who thinks himself more righteous and holy, more steady and steadfast, than his fallen brother; and conceits he has more power to preserve himself than others: such an one thinks himself to be some great thing; when, alas! every man is nothing; and the best of men having nothing but what the grace of God confers upon them, 2 Cor. xii. 11. Observe, 2. How the apostle strikes at the root of the fore-mentioned sin of pride and self-conceit; namely, the comparing of themselves with those who are worse than themselves, which is very apt to stir up pride and arrogancy: to cure which, he directs them to compare themselves with those who are better than themselves, and to try and prove their own works by the

rule of the word of God, and not by the example and practice of others; and so shall they find matter of rejoicing in themselves, in the testimony of God, and the silent applause of their own consciences, without borrowing matter of rejoicing from the failings and infirmities of other persons. Observe, 3. The argument or motive used by the apostle to enforce upon every man the duty of trying his own work, rather than to be prying into the infirmities of others; because when he cometh to judgment, every man must bear *his own burden*, or give an account of himself and his own actions to God; who will then absolve or condemn men, not as they have done better or worse than others, but as they shall be then found in themselves, absolutely considered. It is a great error for any man to measure himself by the measure of other men, either by their perfections, or by their imperfections. To conclude our estate safe, because we are not so bad as others, or unsafe, because we have not attained to the perfections of others, is alike dangerous: God will not proceed by this rule, no more should we; every man that appears before him, shall *bear his own burden*, and answer for his own sins. Here note, 1. That how light soever men make of sin in the commission of it, it will be found heavy and burdensome when they come before God to account for it; *He shall bear his own burden.* Note, 2. That the righteous God, in the great judgment, will call no man to account for the sins of others, unless he has some ways been accessory to them; but *every man shall bear his own burden* both of guilt and punishment.

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

In this and the following verses our apostle enters upon a new exhortation, and that is, to stir up the Galatians to liberality and beneficence; upon every fitting occasion, to be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and to do good unto all men. And because it is highly probable, that by reason of the prevalency of error amongst them, and the number of false teachers found with them, the Galatians' love to the word, and to the ministers and dispensers of it, was grown cold: he first begins to stir up their liberality towards their teachers, saying, *Let him that is taught in the word of the gospel, communicate unto him that teacheth* in all such good things as he stands in need of. Learn hence, 1. That the wisdom of God hath seen it fit to teach men by the ministry of man, not by his

own immediate voice, this we cannot bear; nor by the glorious angels, these would rather terrify than teach us; but by men like ourselves, doth the great God instruct us. He has appointed some to teach, and obliged others to be taught; but the pride of man is grown to that pitch in our days, that almost every one thinks himself sufficient to teach, and few have humility enough to be taught. Learn, 2. That it is the special duty of ministers, not only to teach, but to teach the word: *Let him that is taught in the word, that is, the written word, as dictated by the Holy Ghost, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.* Our business is not to go into the pulpit and read a lecture to our people out of *Aristotle's Ethics*, or *Seneca's Morals*, much less to load them with the burden of unwritten traditions; but to make known a crucified Saviour to them, and the way to eternal salvation by him. Learn, 3. That seeing the ministers of Christ are to give themselves wholly to the work of teaching, &c. without being entangled with the affairs of this life; the people whom they teach, and amongst whom they spend their time and strength, are obliged by common equity, as well as by the command of God, to allow them a comfortable subsistence; and, if able, an honourable maintenance: *Let him that is taught communicate to him that teacheth in all good things.* Learn, 4. That the church's maintenance is only due to such ministers as are apt to teach, that labour in the word themselves: none have a right to the church's salary, which do not perform the church's service. Let such laymen as by the impropriations take away the vicar's bread, and such clergymen as eat the sweat of their curates' brow, consider how they will answer it at the bar of God.

7 Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Here the apostle offers several arguments to consideration, for exciting them to the fore-mentioned duty of liberality and Christian beneficence in general, and to the ministers of the word in particular; and the first of them is taken from God's omniscience, who takes notice of all the petty and pitiful pretences, pleas, and excuses, which men make, why they cannot be so kind as they should be to the ministers and members of Jesus Christ. Alas! their own

wants are many, (but it is their lusts that make them so;) their burdens are great upon them, and they must provide and take care for themselves: but, says the apostle, though you may with these lying pretences cheat yourselves, and mock your ministers and poor neighbours, yet God is not, will not, cannot be mocked. There is no juggling with God, no deceiving of his eye; man never deceives himself so much, as when he thinks to deceive God in the least: man may be mocked and deceived by man, but God can never be mocked by man. Observe, 2. St. Paul compares charity and Christian bounty to seed sown, and assures us, that the crop we reap shall be answerable, both in quality and kind, and also in measure and degree, to the seed we now sow; *Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* Learn, That every man's harvest hereafter shall be according to his seed-time here. The actions of this life are as seed sown for the life to come; if the husbandman sow tares, he must not expect to reap wheat; *For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* Observe, 3. How the apostle doth amplify in particular, what he had before asserted in general; namely, that such as the seed is, such will the harvest be. He that soweth to the flesh, that is plainly, he that spends his substance upon his lusts, seeking no more than the gratification of his sensual desires, shall reap corruption: that is, a perishing satisfaction only at present, and eternal perdition afterwards; but he that sows to the Spirit, he that improves his estate for God, for the support of the gospel, for the sustenance of its members, *Shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.* The spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, will also raise us up at the great day, and reward our present parting with the things of this world which we cannot keep, with eternal life which we shall never lose.

9 And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. 10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

The holy apostle, in these words, exhorts the Galatians, and in them all Christians, to the practice of one of the most important parts and duties of the Christian religion, namely that of doing good one to another: and he doth not barely excite us to the duty, but he exhorts us also to an unwearied diligence in the doing of it, according to our ability and opportunity. In

the exhortation before us, observe, 1. The grand comprehensive *duty* we are exhorted to: *well-doing*, and an *unwearied diligence* therein. This comprehends all those ways and means whereby we may be beneficial and useful one to another, both to soul and body, in spiritual and temporal good things, and promote both the present comfort and future happiness of each other. Observe, 2. The extent and latitude of the duty, with respect to its object, which is all mankind: *Let us do good unto all*. The Galatians were in danger of judaizing in their practice, as well as in their doctrines; that is, of loving none but themselves and their own countrymen. For the Jews were grown so sour and churlish in their temper, that they would not do the least office of kindness to any that was not of their own nation: therefore St. Paul here exhorts them to extend their charity universally to all and every one that is of the same nature with themselves. Observe, 3. The special and particular objects of our charity: *the household of faith*. Do good to all, but especially to them. By the *household of faith*, as appears by the context, ver. 6. are primarily meant the ministers of God, the teachers of his word; these are God's domestic servants. Wherever there has been a people, there has been a religion professed, such as it was; wherever there has been a religion professed, there have been persons consecrated and set apart to attend the service of that religion, and a maintenance provided for those attendants; it was so by God's appointment under the law, and by Christ's under the gospel, 1 Cor. ix. 14. But farther, by the *household of faith*, we are to understand the whole collective body of believing Christians, all the members of Christ's mystical body; such are very dear to God, and ought to be so to us. Observe, 4. The subject of this duty, or whom it doth eminently concern, all Christians: *As we have opportunity, let us do good*; that is, every one of us; for verily there is no condition in the world so mean and despicable, but it yields persons an opportunity one way or other of doing good, if not by their purse, yet at least by their prayers and by their example. Observe, 5. The frequency of the duty: *As we have opportunity*; that is, as often as the occasions of doing good are presented to us, and as long as ability for doing good is found with us. Some men defer doing good till they come to die, till they come to make their will; that unwilling will in which they give God a small pittance of his own, because they can keep it no longer; they will repent when they are dying, and be charitable

after they are dead. Good God! how unwilling are men to part with either their money or their sins, as long as they can keep them! But verily a death-bed charity may be as unavailable as a death-bed repentance. The rule is, *As we have opportunity*, that is, as often as an opportunity is offered. Let us decline no opportunity by getting out of the way, with some, when a work of charity presents itself unto us. Observe, 6. The measure of this duty; as we have ability, *let us do good unto all*; that is, proportionably to what God hath given us, let us be willing to give to others: God could easily level the world, and give every man alike; but he is pleased to give some more than others, on purpose to try their graces, the charity and bounty of the rich, the faith and patience of the poor. And verily an estate above what sufficeth our occasions and necessities, is no farther a blessing to us, than as it puts an opportunity into our hands of doing more good than others. Observe, 7. An unwearied perseverance in doing good required at our hands: *Let us not be weary in well-doing*. Though we have done much good, there is room for more; new objects will appear, new occasions will arise, new opportunities will present themselves unto us. Let us never think we can do enough, much less too much good; the best of beings are most unwearied in well-doing. God, Christ, the holy angels, are never weary of this blessed work; let us never be weary in imitating them in that which is their highest and chiefest excellency and perfection. Observe, 8. The argument and encouragement to the cheerful discharge of this duty: *In due season we shall reap, if we faint not*; that is, sooner or later, either in this world, or in the next, or in both, we shall certainly receive the reward of well-doing. We shall reap; but what? Answer, We shall reap the blessing of God upon all we have, are, and do; we shall reap the benefit and blessings of their prayers, to whom we extend our charity; we shall reap the highest pleasure and satisfaction in our own minds of doing good, with which no sensual pleasure can be compared. The reflections upon any good we have done, is a perpetual spring of peace and pleasure to us; the thoughts of it lie even and easy in our minds, and the remembrance of it refreshes the soul with a strange kind of delight and joy. But, Lord; what tongue can utter, or what heart conceive, that vast and unspeakable reward, which an unwearied diligence in well-doing will meet with in the world! It will plead for us at the day of judgment, and procure at the hands of a merciful

God, for the rich merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, a glorious recompence at the resurrection of the just: and proportionable to the degrees of our charity, will be the dispensations of this reward. From the whole learn, That great are the obligations which all Christians do lie under of doing good one to another, according to their abilities and opportunities. Learn, 2. That great is the reward of well-doing; which Christians may eye as a motive to an unwearied diligence, and unfainting perseverance in well-doing.

11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

It is very probable that St. Paul ordinarily did only dictate, and that some other person wrote his epistles, as that to the Romans, wrote by Tertius, *Rom. xvi. 22*. Sometimes he only wrote the *salutation*, and subscribed the epistle with his own hand, *1 Cor. xvi. 22*; but here he tells the Galatians that he wrote this epistle to them all with his own hand, having never wrote so large an epistle wholly with his own hand to any church as he did to them. This he did for two reasons, 1. To testify the fervency of his affection towards them, and to insinuate how much he loved them. 2. To evidence the sincerity of his endeavours for their present and future happiness: to accomplish these ends, he judged no pains too great. From whence learn, 1. That the faithful ministers of Christ will stick at no pains, but encounter with all difficulties, to advance the good of souls in general, and to reduce an erroneous and wandering people in particular, to the obedience of the gospel. Thus this great apostle, though he had upon him the care of all the churches, and consequently a multiplicity of business, many avocations, and a multitude of distractions; yet, in order to the reclaiming of these Galatians, who were deeply tinctured with error, as well as dangerously tainted with sin, he redeems time for, and undergoes the fatigue and trouble of, writing this whole epistle to them with his own hand: *You see how large a letter I have written with mine own hand*. Learn, 2. That it neither savours of pride nor vain-glory in the ministers of the gospel, if upon occasion, though sparingly, they make known to the world the great pains they have taken for promoting the good of their people, that so they may be excited the more to bring forth fruit answerable to the cost and culture which the ministers of Christ have expended upon them. St. Paul here sticks not to tell the Galatians, and the whole world, the pains he had been at in writing this

large epistle with his own hand to them; yet it was not to commend himself, but to excite and encourage them.

12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. 13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

Here our apostle returns to the description which he had before given of the false apostles, who, though they urged the necessity of circumcision, yet it was not with any sincerity of intention: it was first to *make a fair shew in the flesh*; that is, to make a fair outward show of religion, an high pretence to holiness, by observing circumcision, and the other abrogated rites of the ceremonial law. And secondly, this pretended zeal of theirs proceeded from pusillanimity and fear, lest they should suffer persecution from the Jews for preaching the doctrine of the gospel, called here the *cross of Christ*, because it treats of a crucified Christ. Now the fury of these persecutors was abated towards those that preached up circumcision, but enraged abundantly against those who preached circumcision down. Observe farther, How well the apostle makes good his charge against these false apostles, the judaizing doctors, that they urged the necessity of circumcision insincerely, and for base ends; namely, because they made no conscience to keep the law themselves, but could dispense with circumcision well enough, if they were amongst their friends, but pleaded for it when in fear of their persecuting enemies; thus they *became all things to all men*, but it was to save themselves. And, lastly, he assures them that they urged circumcision upon them, *that they might glory in their flesh*; that is, might pride themselves that you were become their converts, by being circumcised at their persuasion, and be able to boast of the multitudes of their proselytes, who received circumcision at their instigation, and carried it as a mark of their instruction. Learn hence, 1. That designing hypocrites do constantly pretend high to religion, but they evermore seek themselves, under a pretence of acting for God and his glory; they that *constrain you to be circumcised, make a fair shew in the flesh*. Learn, 2. That though it is our duty to eschew persecution when we can fairly avoid it, yet we must not part with the

least iota of truth, or espouse the smallest error, to avoid the sharpest persecution; *They constrain you to be circumcised lest they should suffer persecution.* Learn, 3. That men who talk loud of religion, and pretend high to it, who preach it to and press it upon others, but do not conscientiously practice it themselves, it is an evident demonstration, that they are men of corrupt minds, of profligate consciences, that do not believe themselves; for he only believes what he says, that lives as he doth believe: *Neither they themselves who are circumcised, says the apostle, keep the law.* Learn, 4. That there is nothing which false teachers and erroneous seducers do so much glory of, magnify themselves by, and pride themselves in, as in the number of their proselytes and converts, which they look upon as so many trophies of their victory, and speaking proofs of their unparalleled abilities; *They constrain men to be circumcised, that they may glory in their flesh.*

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Having shown what it was that the false apostles gloried in, he next shows what it was that he himself gloried in; namely, *in the cross of Christ*; that is, in his preaching Christ crucified, and the necessity of faith in him who died as a sacrifice upon the cross. The cross of Christ is taken three ways in scripture, materially, metaphorically, and metonymically. The material cross of Christ is that which he died upon at Jerusalem: this the church of Rome glories in greatly, but not the apostle. The metaphorical cross of Christ, is afflictions, *Luke ix. 23. Let him take up the cross*; that is, submit to any afflictions. God oft-times sanctifies this cross, for the crucifying the hearts of his people to the world. But the cross of Christ is taken metonymically for the gospel, the doctrine of the gospel, or of him that died upon the cross. Now Christianity, or the doctrine of the gospel, crucifies us to the world: first, by discovering to us the great vanity and emptiness of the world and all the perishing satisfactions of it; secondly, by propounding such arguments to crucify the world, as were never heard of from all the philosophers and wise men that ever lived in the world; namely, arguments taken from the glory of God, from the death of Christ, from the dignity of the soul, &c. Learn hence, That such a Christian as doth experimentally find his heart and affections daily

more and more crucified to the world, by the cross of Christ, has unspeakable cause and reason sufficient for spiritual glorying and rejoicing. *Question*, Wherein consists not our crucifixion to the world? *Answer*. It consists not in a vile esteem of the world, as useless or hurtful; or in casting off all care and concern for the things of the world, as sinful and unnecessary; nor is every degree of desire after, love unto, or delight in, the things of the world, inconsistent with our being crucified to it: nor doth it consist in, or oblige us to, the withdrawing ourselves from all society and conversation with the men of the world. But, positively, crucifixion to the world consists in a crucified judgment and opinion of the world; in crucifying our love and affections to the world; in crucifying our hopes and expectations from the world; in crucifying our care and concern for the world; in crucifying our delight in, and our endeavours after, the world. *Quest*. How doth a Christian's being crucified to the world, afford him cause for unspeakable rejoicings? *Ans*. Thus: We may, and ought to, glory in the blessed effect and fruit of Christ's death in re-stamping the image of God upon the soul, in the certain tokens of the love of God: we may glory in the death of Christ's enemy, and our soul's enemy: we may glory in that wherein God is glorified, and in that which is the earnest of our own glorification. Now crucifixion to the world, by the cross of Christ, is this, all this, and therefore warrantably to be boasted of, and gloried in.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Here the apostle subjoins a reason why he gloried only in the cross of Christ, and not in those carnal ordinances and fleshly privileges of circumcision, &c. which the false apostles so much gloried in: namely, because *circumcision*, nor *uncircumcision*, neither the presence of that ordinance, nor the want of it, availeth any thing, as to our acceptance with Christ, and interest in him: but *the new creature* is all in all; a circumcised heart, not a circumcised foreskin, a renewed nature, a divine temper of mind, rendering us like to Christ; this will enable us to love him, and qualify us for living with him now in Christ Jesus. That is, now under the Christian dispensation, under the economy of the gospel, neither the presence nor absence of this outward badge of circumcision will avail any thing to our justification before God: but that which was signified by circumcision, is the thing that pleased God; namely, the

2 Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

These words may be considered two ways, 1. As a religious salutation, taken from the manner of the Jews, who expressed their desires for one another's well-doing, by wishing *peace*, that is, all kind of happiness and prosperity to each other; Christianity doth neither forbid or abolish, but doth spiritualize and improve, civility, humanity, and common courtesy. 2. The words may be considered as an apostolical benediction, in imitation of the priest's blessing, *Numb. vi.* The apostles were the patriarchs or spiritual fathers of the church of the New Testament, as the sons of Jacob were of the Old; accordingly they bless their children, wishing *grace from God the Father*, or grace from God as a Father; thereby denoting, that God bestows not his *grace* as a Creator, but as a Father in Christ, in a discriminating way and peculiar manner. And *peace from our Lord Jesus Christ*; he being the purchaser of our peace, he upon whom the chastisement of our peace was laid, and he that made peace for us by the blood of his cross; and thereupon God of his free grace accepts us, justifies us, and is at peace with us. Learn, That such as have received most grace from God, stand in farther need of supplies of grace from him; they are thankful for peace, but they cannot content themselves with peace without grace; they desire both to have the heart and love of God set upon them, as well as pacified towards them; they desire to be pardoned, but above all seek to be beloved of the Father.

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ.

Observe here, 1. The work which the heart of the apostle was set upon, and that is, the work of blessing God: we bless God one way, he blesses us another; he blesses us imperatoriously, by commanding his blessings upon us; we bless him optatively, when with thankful hearts we praise him, when we wish well to him, and speak well of him. Lord, what an infinite favour and privilege is this vouchsafed to us, not only to pray to God and receive blessings from him, but to admit us to bless him, and to account himself honoured by us, when we acknowledge him the fountain of all blessings and blessedness to us his creatures! Observe, 2. The title under which our apostle blessed him,

namely, as the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. He doth not say now under the gospel, as of old under the law, Blessed be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; or, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; but, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Where note, 1. He is a God to Christ, in relation to his being man: Christ being foreordained before the foundation of the world, to the work and office of a Mediator, 1 *Pet. i. 20.* and the Father making a covenant or federal transaction with him from all eternity as Mediator. Note, 2. He is a Father to Christ, and that both as God and man: a father to him as God, by eternal and ineffable generation, the one being *Deus gignens*, and the other *Deus genitus*: thus he was the only begotten Son of the Father: and Father to him as man, by virtue of the personal union of the two natures in Christ, *Luke i. 32.* Therefore *that holy thing shall be called the Son of God*. Observe, 3. The reason why under these relations he so affectionately blesses God, namely, for bestowing blessings, spiritual blessings, all spiritual blessings; and this is in or concerning heavenly things, which tend to fit us for heaven and eternal glory. And lastly, all these blessings are conferred upon us in Christ, he, by his merit, hath purchased them; he, as our head and advocate, in our name has received them; by virtue of our union with whom we have a right unto them, and shall ere long in heaven be fully and finally possessed of them. Behold here the transcendent bounty and liberality of our heavenly Father. He has more than one blessing for his children, he has all spiritual and heavenly blessings for them, *grace* on earth, and *glory* in heaven; grace to enable them to glorify him upon earth, and glory as the reward of grace with himself in heaven. Rejoice, O Christian, in thy lot and portion; God himself hath but all things, and so hast thou. Has he all spiritual blessings in heaven in full possession? thou hast them also in right and title at present, and ere long shalt enjoy them in full fruition. Eternally *blessed* then *be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, or in heavenly things, in Christ*.

4. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that he should be holy, and without blame before him in love:

Our apostle having in the former verse offered up a very solemn thanksgiving to

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God, for blessing the Ephesians with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ, he comes in this verse to discover and declare the fountain from whence all these spiritual blessings did proceed and flow, namely, from God's gracious purpose in our election before all time; *He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, &c.* Where note, 1. The favour vouchsafed, election; and the fruit and product of that favour, holiness of life and conversation. Note, 1. The favour and privilege vouchsafed by God, *He hath chosen.* This denotes the freeness of the favour: he chose when he might have refused. His book of life is a book of love; the cause of our love is in the object; the reason of God's love is in himself. Note, 2. The subject of this favour, *He hath chosen us*, us Gentiles. The Jews much gloried in their being a *chosen generation*, a peculiar people; we Gentiles are a chosen generation also; they were beloved for their father's sake, Abraham's, we for Christ's sake. Note, 3. The antiquity of this favour: *Before the foundation of the world*: that is, from all eternity. The apostle, to take the Jews off from boasting, as they did, that the world was made for their sake, and that the Messiah from the beginning of the world did enter into a covenant with God to redeem them especially, declares, that the despised Gentiles were elected and chosen by God to be an holy people to himself; and all this, in the purpose of God, before the foundations of the world were laid. Note, 4. God is said to have chosen us in Christ, as our head. Consider Christ as God, so we are chosen by him. *I know whom I have chosen*, says Christ. Consider him as a Mediator; so we are chosen in him, not for him: because, not Christ's undertaking for us, but the Father's good pleasure towards us, was the spring and fountal cause of our election. The truth is, God was so far from choosing the Gentiles out of faith foreseen, that he did not choose them for the sake and obedience of Christ foreseen; God did not love us from eternity because Christ was to die for us in time, but because he loved us with an everlasting love; therefore in the fulness of time, Christ was sent to die for us: so that the death of Christ was the fruit and effect, but not the cause of our election. No other reason, says bishop Fell upon the place, can be assigned of this privilege, but the good pleasure of God; and if Christ's sufferings were not the cause of our election, much less our own deservings, as he adds there; Almighty God not choosing us because worthy, but to make

us worthy by choosing us. Note, 5. The effect and fruit, the benefit and end, of this free and ancient favour: *That we should be holy and without blame before him in love.*

1. Holiness is here declared not to be the cause, but the effect of our election: God chose the Gentiles from eternity to be his people, not because they were holy, they were far enough from that, being as far off from God, but designing that they thus graciously chosen should be holy; initially, progressively, and perseveringly holy in this life, and perfectly holy in the next; yet arriving at such a perfection here in holiness as to denominate us *blameless* in the account of God, by virtue of our faith in Christ, and love to one another. From the whole learn, 1. That God's bestowing all spiritual blessings upon us in time, is the effect and fruit of his electing love from all eternity; *He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, according as he hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world.* Learn, 2. That God hath chosen none to happiness and glory hereafter, but only such as are holy in conversation here, holy in the habitual frame and disposition of their hearts, and in the general course and tenor of their lives and actions. Learn, 3. That such as are holy before God, will endeavour to walk unblamably in the sight of man, in the exercise of love, and in the practice of all the duties of the second table, which are at once evidences of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession; *That we should be holy, and without blame, before him in love.*

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved:

That is, "Having predestinated us Gentiles, who in the esteem of the Jews were accounted dogs, to be his adopted sons and daughters, in and by Jesus Christ, in whom he hath made us accepted, to the abundant praise and glory of his free grace and mercy." Observe here, 1. That none are the children of God by nature: none are born sons, but made sons; not of their own, but God's making; and in order to this glorious privilege, we were *predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.* Observe, 2. The attribute mentioned here by the apostle, which moved God to predestinate us to the adoption of children: it was the glory of his grace, he mentions not the glory of his holiness, the glory of his justice, or the glory of his

power, because the glory of his power is manifested in making of the world, the glory of his holiness in making of his law, the glory of his justice in turning the transgressors of that law into hell; but his *grace* he shows no where so much as in the predestination of his children, and in what he hath predestinated them unto; he showeth indeed all his attributes herein, but *grace* over and above all the rest. Observe, 3. The effect and fruit of this privilege, namely, of our being predestinated to the adoption of children, and that is, our being made accepted in Christ the Beloved; the word is properly rendered, He hath made us dear, precious, and delightful, to himself; or in one word, He hath ingratiated us. Here note, That as Jesus Christ is in an eminent manner beloved of God and accepted with him, so in like manner all God's adopted children do, and shall, find favour with God, and acceptance through Christ: *He hath made us freely accepted in the Beloved.*

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Our apostle having, in the foregoing verses, enumerated the great and glorious privileges which the children of God were made partakers of before all time, comes next to discover what they are admitted to the participation of in time: and here in this verse he mentions two of them, namely, redemption and remission of sin. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, &c.* Here note, The privilege itself, *redemption*; the Redeemer, *Jesus Christ*; the price of his redemption paid down, *his blood*: one fruit of this redemption instanced in for all the rest, *the forgiveness of sin*: and, lastly, the spring or source of all this, *the riches of his grace*. Learn, 1. The deplorable state into which the whole race of mankind was brought into by sin; namely, an estate of slavery and bondage, and spiritual captivity unto sin. Redemption supposes this; slaves and captives need a redeemer, none else; we are all by nature under slavery to sin, to Satan, and the curse of the law, and the wrath of God. Learn, 2. That there was no delivery to be had from this slavery but by a price paid down to the justice of God; redemption is a delivery by ransom and price. Learn, 3. That no other price did or could redeem us from our miserable captivity, but the blood of Christ: *We have redemption through his blood*. Learn, 4. That all believers, and only they, have remission of their sins, through the redemption purchased for

them by the blood of Christ. Learn, 5. That God's free grace, and Christ's full satisfaction, do stand well together in the work of redemption and remission of sin. True, God had a satisfaction from the hand of our surety Christ Jesus; but was it not free grace and rich mercy in God, to accept of a surety and a substitution, when the rigour of the law required none, and would admit of none, but demanded that the soul which sinned should die? Was it not free mercy, not only to accept a surety, but to provide a surety for us as God did, and this surety his own Son? And to deliver up this Son to a painful, shameful, and accursed death, that we might have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace?

8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he had purposed in himself:

That is, in which dispensation of his, namely, our redemption from sin and wrath by the blood of his Son, God the Father hath discovered abundant wisdom, wonderful wisdom, riches of divine wisdom, to the children of men. Taking the words in this sense, the observation is, that God's sending his Son into the world to suffer in our stead, and to satisfy for our sin, was not only an act of special grace and peculiar favour, but also an evidence and demonstration of wonderful wisdom in God: *He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom*. O what wonderful wisdom appeared in the contrivance of the work of redemption, and in the accomplishment of it! What wisdom, in appointing such a Mediator as was fit to reconcile God to man, and man to God! What wisdom, in laying the platform and design of the gospel in such a way and manner, as at once to advance the honour, and secure the glory of God, and to promote the holiness and comfort of man! Observe next, The description which St. Paul gives us of the gospel, and the preaching of it; it is the mystery of God's will revealed and made known to a lost world. Learn, That the gospel's method for recovering and saving lost sinners by a Redeemer, was a mystery, a hidden mystery: it was hid where all the world could never have found it, where angels and men could never discover it; it was hid in God, in his breast and bosom, in his heart and thoughts; it was hid from angels; nay, the churches knew it before the angels; yea, the angels learnt it from

the churches, *Eph. iii. 10.* Unto principalities and powers is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God: and as it was hid from angels, so from the wise men of the world, *1 Cor. ii. 8.* "We preach the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew;" nay, the gospel was hid from all the saints of the Old Testament, comparatively, not absolutely, with respect to that clear revelation which we have of the gospel now, it may be said to be hidden from them then. O, what obligation then do we lie under, who live under the dispensation of the gospel, to acknowledge what an infinite favour it is from God clearly to know the mystery of his will, concerning the redemption and salvation of poor lost sinners by a Mediator! God has now revealed it, and he desires all may know and receive the revelation of it, namely, the hidden mystery of his will. Observe, lastly, What was the impelling and moving cause of God's making known the mysteries of his will to a lost world: it was his own good pleasure, which he had proposed in himself; God's making known the mystery of his will by the gospel, and his enlightening the understandings of men savingly to apprehend it, proceeds entirely from the purpose and pleasure of his own good will: *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself.*

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth: even in him,

These words discover to us the end and design of God in making known the mystery of his will, that is, in revealing the gospel: it was to gather into one universal church both angels and men, Jews and Gentiles, under Christ their head, and by virtue of that union to become one with the Father, as he and Christ are one. Here note, 1. That Christ is the Head both of angels and men; an head of confirmation to the angels, of redemption to fallen man: both angels and saints in heaven and on earth make up one family, of which Christ is the head; the angels are a part of the worshippers of Christ as well as we, they are a part of his family and household; the angels fill our churches as well as men, and are present in our congregations and assemblies, *1 Cor. xi. 10.* Note, 2, That all mankind by nature, and as considered in themselves, are under a fearful dissipation or scattering; sin hath

rent and separated them from God, from man, and from the blessed angels. *Gathering together* presupposes a foregoing scattering. Note, 3. That the purpose and design of God, in discovering the truths of the gospel unto men, was this, that he might gather them together into union with Jesus Christ; that by virtue of that union, they might be one with the Father, as he and Christ are one: *That in the fulness of time he might gather together in one body in Christ all things, capable of eternal happiness, both in heaven and earth; even in him who is the head of that body, whereof angels as well as men are members.*

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Our apostle having hitherto spoken of the glorious privileges of the gospel in general, he comes now to make application of this his doctrine, first to the Jews, and next to the Gentiles in particular. As to the Jews, who were first called by Christ and his apostles, and who were the first that trusted or hoped in Christ for salvation, before there was any considerable number of converts among the Gentiles, he declares, that these Jewish believers, whereof himself was one, had, in and through Christ, obtained a right to be God's portion and peculiar people; and that they should not, by embracing the gospel, lose that ancient privilege which their forefathers so mightily boasted of, and gloried in: namely, to be a chosen generation, and a peculiar people: but together with their being God's portion, they should have a right to an inheritance. *In whom we have obtained an inheritance; namely, an inheritance in the heavenly Canaan, the inheritance of the saints in light; and to this inheritance, says he, you have been appointed, God having fore-ordained that this inheritance should be the portion of all believers, and the consequent of faith in Christ, by virtue of which we become the sons of God, and all this to the praise of his own glory; that is, to the intent that his glorious attributes of wisdom, goodness, and mercy, might be acknowledged and highly praised.* Learn hence, 1. That to be called to faith, and brought to believe in Christ, before others, is a favour and special prerogative which some persons have above others. *We who first believed in Christ.* It is an high honour

above all others, to be in Christ before others, *Rom. xvi. 7. Who were in Christ before me.* Learn, 2. That as all believers are God's portion, and the lot of his inheritance, so they do obtain from him right and title to a lot and share in an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeeth not away, reserved in the heavens for them: *We have obtained an inheritance.* Learn, 3. That Jesus Christ the Mediator, is that person in, by, and through whom, believers are instituted to this inheritance: *In whom, &c.* Christ hath purchased this inheritance for them; he hath promised it to them; he has already taken, and still keeps possession of it for them; and he will put them into the full and final possession of it at the great day. Learn, 4. That the great end and design of God, in all the distinguishing favours and benefits which by Jesus Christ we obtain from him, is this, *That we should be to the praise of his glory.* The words may be understood, 1. Passively; the praise of his glory was to be manifested in them. 2. Actively; that the high praises of God were to be set forth by them.

13 *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,* 14 *Which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

Here the apostle recounts the favours and privileges which the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, upon their believing in Christ were admitted to the participation of; he assures them, that in and through Christ they had obtained a right to this heavenly inheritance also, as well as the Jews, having been brought to trust and believe in him, by hearing the word of truth, the doctrine of the gospel, preached to them. And next, that they were sealed for the children of God, by the sanctifying Spirit promised to the sons of God, which produced a real renovating change in their hearts and lives, and so was a pledge and earnest of, as well as made them meet and fit for, the heavenly inheritance; the full enjoyment of which is not to be expected till the last day, when (and not before) all believers shall receive complete redemption, and their bodies being raised, shall be reunited to their souls, and both rendered perfectly and everlastingly happy. The end of God, in all this dispensation of grace and mercy

to the Gentiles, being the same with that before mentioned to the Jews; namely, the praise of his own glorious grace. Here observe, 1. That both the Gentiles and Jews are saved by the same faith and trust in Christ; *In whom ye also trusted*; as they have the same common inheritance, so have they the same common affiance and faith in Christ. Observe, 2. That the faith of the Gentiles came by hearing of the word: *In whom ye also trusted, after ye heard the word, &c.* that is, presently after they heard they believed and obeyed; *Col. i. 6. Ye obeyed from the very first day that we preached the gospel.* What a shame and reproach is this to those amongst us, who have heard the gospel preached all their days, yet never did believe or obey the gospel! Observe, 3. A double encomium which the apostle gives the gospel by which these Gentile Ephesians were converted; he calls it, 1. *The word of truth*; that is, a word of the most eminent and excellent truth. There is no truth that ever God swore to but the truth of the gospel. The law is truth as well as the gospel, but the law was made without an oath; had it been made with an oath, it had never been recalled; the gospel is sealed with an oath, and therefore shall never be reversed. 2. He calls it the *gospel of salvation*, and the *gospel of their (the Ephesians') salvation*. It is called a gospel of salvation, because the matter of it is salvation, because the offer of it is salvation, and it declares the only way and means by which lost sinners may obtain salvation. And the gospel of their salvation, because God had by his Holy Spirit made the preaching of this gospel effectual for their conversion and salvation. Observe, 4. The privilege which the Ephesian Gentiles obtained, after they had by faith consented to this gospel of salvation; and that was their sealing: *After ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.* Where note, That the privilege of sealing always follows the duty of believing, never goes before it. Sealing doth imply that precious and excellent esteem which they have with God. Nothing but what is precious is sealed by us. Who seals up dung and pebbles in a bag? Believers are God's jewels, his treasure, therefore sealed. Sealing also is for safety and security, for discrimination, and for confirmation. The Holy Spirit, by sanctifying of us, doth discriminate and distinguish us from the rest of the world, doth secure and preserve us from the fatal danger of a ruinous apostasy, and doth also confirm our hopes of the glorious inheritance. Observe, 5. That the Holy Spirit is given to believers in the nature of an earn-

est; sanctifying grace, wrought in the heart here, is a sure earnest of glory hereafter; *which is the earnest of our inheritance.* An earnest binds the bargain, and is a part of the bargain, if it be but a shilling given as an earnest, it secures a contract for a thousand pounds. Believers are to consider and look upon grace, not barely as grace but as an earnest of glory. O, be thankful to God for his sanctifying Spirit, not only as subduing thy corruptions, but as a pledge and earnest of a glorious inheritance. It is a great comfort to find grace in the soul, as sanctifying, as quickening, and renewing; but a greater matter of rejoicing to find it also there as witnessing, as sealing and confirming, as a part of our inheritance in glory, and as a pledge and earnest of the whole. Observe, 6. That the Holy Spirit of God is God. To sanctify, to seal, to confirm our hearts, are divine operations: he that doth these, must be a divine Person. True; how the Spirit of God is God, and how he proceedeth from the Father and Son, cannot be comprehended by our reason and shallow understandings. No wonder that the doctrine of the Trinity is inexplicable, seeing the nature of God is incomprehensible; our faith, then, must assent to what our reason cannot comprehend, otherwise we can never be Christians. Observe, lastly, That heaven is here called a possession, and a purchased possession, that is, by the blood of Christ. A king's ransom we account a vast sum; O, what will our ransom by the blood of the Son of God come to! Grace is purchased, and glory is purchased, both by the blood of Christ. Lord! what will that glory come to! In eternity we shall admire it, but never fully comprehend it.

15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

Observe here, 1. The special duties which St. Paul performed on the behalf of these Ephesians: he gave thanks for them, he prayed for them, and both without ceasing. *I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.* Where note, How enlarged St. Paul's heart was in thankfulness to God for the salvation of others, as well as unwearied in his endeavours in order to their salvation. This will be one great exercise of our grace in heaven; namely, thankfulness to God for the salvation of others, as well as our own;

and, verily, it ought to be a mighty argument to move the heart of any one to work out his own salvation, when he sees another, be it his minister, his parent, his master, or his neighbour, so solicitous for it, and taking such care of it. Note farther, That the duties of prayer and praise, of supplication and thanksgiving, ought to accompany one another: We are never to pray for fresh mercies, either for ourselves or others, without giving thanks to God for former mercies. Besides, there is no such effectual way of begging, as thanksgiving; he that is spiritually thankful for what he has received, engages God to confer upon him the mercies which he wanteth. Add to this, that holy thankfulness is an evidence of true grace in us. Need and want will make us beggars, but grace only thanksgiving. Observe, 2. The occasion of St. Paul's prayers and praises on the Ephesians' behalf; namely, his having heard, 1. of their faith in Christ; 2. Of their love to all saints.—Where note, How he joins faith and love together, as the two most eminent graces, and as the two great evangelical commandments, faith in Christ, and love to saints. But how comes he not to make mention of their love to God? *Ans.* Because love to God is supposed and necessarily included in our love to saints as saints; for he that loves them that are begotten, much more loves him that begetteth; he that loves the child for the father's sake, loves the father much more for his own sake. Note farther, it is love to saints, as saints, and to all saints without exception, that is the evidence of true faith; poor saints as well as rich, weak saints as well as gifted. There are froward and fretful saints, passionate and peevish Christians, who have many infirmities, great infirmities cleaving to them, though disallowed by them; yet these professing Christians are loved and to be loved by us, even as a brother loveth all his brothers, for his father's sake that begat them all, though one be little, another lame, a third crooked, a fourth sickly. Lord! how far are the professors of this day from the practice of this duty! How doth a little difference in judgment occasion a great deal of judging and rash censuring one another: Christ hath received us; why should we reject one another! One heaven will hold us all hereafter; why should not one communion hold us here! Verily, if children quarrel and fall out with one another at a full table, there is an enemy at their back that will quickly take away the vider: if our hearts be not turned suddenly to one another, Almighty God will certainly come and smite the earth with a curse.

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him :

These words give us a short, but very comprehensive, account of that affectionate prayer which St. Paul put up to God on the behalf of these Ephesians, newly converted to Christianity; in which observe, 1. The person whom he prays unto, God, under a very endearing title, for the strengthening of his faith; he styles him, not as the Old-Testament saints, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but in the language of the New Testament, *The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father of Glory. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ*, as he is Man and Mediator, commissioned of him, and sent by him; and *the Father of glory*, as being in himself infinitely glorious; to whom all glory is and ought to be ascribed, and from whom alone it is communicated. Learn hence, That as all our prayers and requests are and ought to be directed unto God only, so in order to our having access to God with assurance in prayer, it is our duty to apply to him as a Father, as a Father in Christ, as a Father in Christ to us, and under this notion and apprehension to strengthen our faith for the obtaining of what we ask in prayer; *May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto you, &c.* Observe, 2. The great and comprehensive blessing prayed for; namely, divine illumination and spiritual knowledge; that is, a farther increase of that wisdom and saving knowledge of divine mysteries, whereof the Spirit of God is the author. Learn hence, That as spiritual wisdom, or the saving knowledge of divine mysteries, is necessary to a Christian; so those who have a good measure of this grace already received, ought not to sit down satisfied with it, but aspire after farther measures and degrees of it; spiritual knowledge is as necessary for increasing grace, as it is for working grace in the soul. Observe, 3. The title here given to the Holy Spirit of God; he is styled *the Spirit of wisdom and revelation*; he being the author of all that knowledge in the mysteries of religion which we attain unto, and it being his proper work and office to reveal unto us the will of God for our salvation. Learn hence, 1. That believers themselves, who are divinely enlightened by the Holy Spirit of God, have yet need of farther measures, and fuller degrees, of spiritual wisdom. Learn 2. That the way to obtain this fuller measure of divine wisdom and spiritual illumination, is to be earnest with God in

prayer for his Holy Spirit. So the apostle here.

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

Our apostle proceeds in this verse, and to the end of the chapter, in a very affectionate and fervent prayer, on the behalf of the Ephesians; namely, that the blessed Spirit of God, the author of all divine illumination, would farther open the eyes of their understanding, formerly shut up in heathenish blindness and darkness, that so they might know, 1. *What is the hope of his calling*; that is, what high and glorious hopes he had called them unto: for *hope* here is taken for the object of hope, or the great and good things hoped for: and it is said to be *the hope of their calling*, because, at their conversion from heathenism to Christianity, they were entitled to, and called to the expectation of, these great and good things, which were the object of hope. Where note, The Ephesians' deplorable state before conversion, they were without hope; and the happy exchange of their condition by embracing Christianity, they were begotten to a lively hope of glorious things, which before they were wholly ignorant of, and strangers to. As a sinner's misery lies not in what he feels, but what he fears; so a Christian's happiness consists not in what he has in hand, but what he has in hope: *May you know what is the hope of his calling*. The second blessing which he prays for on their behalf, is, that they may know *what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints*; that is, say some, What an exceeding glorious thing it is to be a Christian! What an exceeding glory redounds to God, by his people, which are his inheritance! say others. But most understand the words as a description of heaven, which is here called an inheritance, a rich inheritance, a glorious inheritance, in or among the saints; that is, the saints in heaven, who hold that in possession which the saints on earth have in hope and expectation. Learn hence, That heaven is the saints' inheritance. An inheritance is an estate that belongs to children, to all such, and none but such. It is an undeserved possession, and it is a sure and certain possession. Here note, That Almighty God is said in scripture to make heaven as sure to his saints, by all sorts of ways, as a man can make an inheritance sure to his child. It is theirs by promise, it is theirs by purchase,

it is theirs by gift, it is theirs by bequest; it is given by will to them, *St. Luke xxii. 29. I appoint by will unto you a kingdom.* Can any thing be surer, or more ways made secure to any person, than this inheritance of heaven is to the holy servants of God? But, farther, the apostle calls it *the riches of the glory of his inheritance*; that is, a very rich and exceedingly glorious inheritance: such abundant riches and transcendent glory are found in it, as overwhelm the mind of man that here enters upon the close contemplation of it. Heaven will appear to be a glorious inheritance, if we consider the glory of the place, the glory of the company, the glory of the employment, and the glory that will be then and there upon our souls and bodies. Lord, make us meet for this glorious inheritance of thy saints in light!

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power. 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,—

The next particular which the apostle prays for, on behalf of the converted Ephesians, is this, that they might know or sensibly apprehend, the greatness of that divine power which God had exerted; first, in their conversion; next, in carrying on that work step by step, in spite of all opposition: then, in giving them the extraordinary gifts of his Spirit, as miracles, tongues, and prophecy; also, the sanctifying graces of the Spirit, as knowledge, faith, hope, love, joy, and patience, to enable them to go on in suffering for Christ to the uttermost; and lastly, that they might know the exceeding greatness of that power which God will farther exert towards them as believers, in raising up their dead bodies, to enter upon that glorious inheritance which God by promise insured to them; which power, he assures them, would bear some likeness to, and correspondence with that omnipotent power which God put forth, in raising Christ from the dead, and advancing him to the heavenly glory, where he is Lord of all. Observe here, What an heap of words our apostle makes use of, to set forth the power of God in the soul's conversion from the power of sin, and in the body's resurrection from the power of the grave: he calls it "power, the power of God, the greatness of his power, and the exceeding greatness of his mighty power, and the power which raised up Christ from the dead." Lord! what a glorious power was

that which opened our Redeemer's grave, when he lay in the heart of the earth, with a mighty stone rolled upon his sepulchre! May the same Almighty Power break asunder all those bars of unbelief, which keep our souls under the power and dominion of sin now, and at the great day break in pieces the bars of death and the grave, that it may be altogether impossible for us any longer to be holden by them: for towards thy saints, and in order to their salvation, thou dost engage the uttermost of thine attributes, the uttermost of thy love, and the exceeding greatness of thy power!

—And set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; 22 And hath put all things under his feet,—

Our apostle, in these words, discovers to us Christ's exaltation, or that glory and dignity which, after his resurrection and ascension, the Father put upon him as God-man, or Mediator; far surpassing the glory of all created beings. Now this is represented to us by the notion, and under the metaphor, of Christ's *sitting at God's right hand*. This imports, 1. Fulness of rest and pleasure, that he quietly, securely, and everlastingly, possesses all that happiness and satisfaction in heaven, which God himself is possessed of, and delighted with, far above all the pleasures and delightful satisfactions which all the glorified saints and glorious angels do or can possibly enjoy. 2. It implies a fulness of honour and glory, of dignity and respect. When Solomon set Bathsheba at his right hand, it was in token of honour and respect to her. *Heb. ii. 9.* we see Jesus to be crowned with glory and honour, sitting down at the right hand of the majesty on high. 3. Christ's sitting at God's right hand, imports his having all rule, dominion, and power, put into his hand, to govern all things both in heaven and on earth. 4. It imports and implies ability to execute that power; all those royal glorious endowments which God filled the human nature of Christ with, to make him fit to be the supreme head of his church, and the great and wise governor of the world; all this doth God's setting Christ at his own right hand import and imply. In the next verse (the 21st) the apostle expresses more plainly, what he had said in the former verse figuratively; God hath exalted Christ (says he) *far above all principalities and pow-*

ers, might and dominion, and every name that is named; and hath put all things under his feet. Where note, 1. The eminency, 2. The universality, of our Lord's exaltation. Its eminency appears in the height of his exaltation; he is not only *above*, but *far above*, all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion; and in the lowness of the subjection of all things to him, *having put all things under his feet.* And the universality of Christ's exaltation appears, by instancing in *principalities and powers, might and dominion*; under which he comprehends all things that are excellent in heaven and earth, angels and men, &c. all creatures whatsoever being placed in a degree of inferiority beneath him, and in the lowest state of subjection under him. Whence we learn, 1. That the human nature of Christ, and his glorified body, by virtue of that unspeakable union between the two natures of Christ, his Godhead and manhood, is so highly dignified and exalted in heaven, that all the glory of heaven and earth, of kings and emperors, of sun, moon, and stars, of the souls of just men made perfect, yea, and of the spotless, glorious angels themselves, is nothing to it, nor may be compared with it. Christ sits now in heaven, in our glorified humanity united to his glorious deity; that body which hung on an ignominious cross in blood and gore, now shines brighter than ten thousand suns in the kingdom of his Father. All this honour and homage, glory and praise, dominion and power, is due to our Lord and Redeemer, as the reward of his sufferings; God hath set him at his own right hand, far above all principalities and powers. Learn, 2. That although the mediatorial kingdom of Christ shall cease at the last day, (and be delivered up by Christ unto his Father,) as to the way wherein he now administers it, by ruling in the midst of his enemies, whom he shall then have finally subdued and destroyed: yet his natural kingdom, as God, shall never cease, but continue *in the world to come*, without end. Those words here, *not only in this world, but in the world to come*, do show the duration of Christ's kingly government, and that he is king for ever and ever, that his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth through eternal ages.

—And gave him to be the head over all *things* to his church. 23 Which is the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

St Paul having spoken of Christ's sovereignty in general, over all created be-

ings, both in heaven and earth, in the foregoing verses, doth in the words before us declare, that as he is an head of dominion and authority to the whole creation in general, so he is an head of influence to his church in particular. Note, Christ was given by the Father to be the church's head. Now, this metaphor of *an head* implies several things; as, 1. Eminency above the church; as the head is above the members. 2. Authority over the church: the head governs all the members. 3. Oneness of nature betwixt him and his church to see an head of one nature, and members of another, is monstrous. 4. It implies a strict, intimate, and close union betwixt him and his church, as betwixt head and members; which union as to the members of the visible church, is a political union; but as to the invisible members, (real believers,) the union betwixt Christ and them is mystical, spiritual, supernatural, and indissoluble. Lastly, this metaphor of an *head*, given here to Christ, implies a communication of influences from himself unto all his members; an influence of common gifts to the visible members of his body, and an influence of spiritual life and motion to the invisible members, true believers. Indeed, Christ is the head of angels as well as saints, but in different respects; to angels, he is an head of dominion and government, an head of authority and superiority; but to his church, he is an head of dominion and direction also; not only an head of authority, but an head of vital influence too. The angels are Christ's honourable subjects, but saints are the mystical members of his body, the former are as the nobles in his kingdom, that attend upon his person, but the latter are the endeared spouse that lies in his bosom. O glorious dignity of the meanest believer above the highest angel! For as the nobles in a prince's court think it a preferment and honour to wait upon his queen, so the glorious angels account it no dishonour to them to serve and administer to the saints, to which honourable office they are appointed, *Heb. i. 14.* namely, *to be ministering, or serviceable spirits, for the good of them that are the heirs of salvation.* As the chiefest servants disdain not to serve the heir, so the angels delight to serve the saints. Observe, 2. As the character here given of Christ, *The head of his church*; so the honourable title put upon the church, she is his body: *The head over all the church, which is his body*; not his natural, but his mystical body. This implies, 1. The church's union with Christ, and her relation to him. 2. The church's receiving influences from him, life, motion, and

strength; all which the members of the body receive by virtue of union with their head. 3. It implies the duty of subjection and obedience due from the church to Christ, as from the members to the head. 4. It implies the union and order among the members themselves: that as all the members of the natural body sympathize with, and are subservient to, each other; so should all the members of the church, Christ's mystical body, employ their gifts, and improve their functions and offices, for the general good of the whole, and the mutual benefit and advantage of each other, as becomes the body of Christ, and members in particular. But especially the church is said here to be the body of Christ, and He her head; 1. With respect to a communication of influences: Christ our head is our fountain of life; our head is our heart also, *out of it are the issues of life*: from him we live, by him we move, and our spiritual being is derived from him, strengthened and sustained by him; the whole church receives spiritual life, motion, and strength from Christ, as the body doth from the animating and enlivening soul. 2. Christ is called here *the head of the church his body*, with respect to a complication of interest, as well as a communication of influences. As the head and the body, as the husband and the wife, so Christ and his church are mutually concerned for each other: they stand and fall, live and die, together; whatsoever he has is theirs; they have nothing but through him, they have all things in him, and by him; his God is their God, his Father is their Father; his blood, his bowels, his merit, his Spirit, his life, his death, is theirs; and as all that he has is his church's, so all that he did is for his church, called here *his body*. He obeyed as his church's head; he died as her head; he rose, ascended, and reigneth, as her head; and hath in his church's name taken possession of heaven, as a purchased inheritance for her. How fitly then may Christ be called the head of the church, and the church be called the body of Christ? Observe, 3. How Christ came to be the head of his church: God the Father gave him this authority, ver. 22. *And gave him to be head over all things to the church*; that dignity and superiority, that dominion and power, which Christ has over his church, is given to him by God the Father; none else was fit for it but himself: and although it was due unto himself, yet it must be given him. Now, if Christ did not exercise any authority over the church till it was given him, what bold presumption is it, and will it be, in any person upon earth to assume any

power over, or to exercise any office in, the church, when never called to it, nor authorized by Christ to undertake it! We may demand of such confident undertakers, as the Pharisees demanded of the holy and humble Jesus, *By what authority dost thou do these things? and who gave thee this authority?* Observe, 4. The high honour which is put upon the church by being Christ's body; by this she becomes Christ's fulness: *The church which is his body, the fulness of him*. Yet note, The church is not the fulness of Christ personal, but of Christ mystical; not of his natural, but mystical, body: every saint, and every degree of grace in a saint, is part of Christ's fulness. The work of the ministry then is the best and noblest work in the world, because it is an adding to the fulness of Christ. God had but one Son in the world; and he made him a minister. And if increasing the number of converts, and adding to persons' growth in grace, be an addition to Christ's fulness, then how glorious a sight will the great day afford when Christ shall have all his fulness; when there shall not be one saint wanting; nor one degree of grace in any saint wanting; when head and members shall be both full, full of grace, full of joy, full of glory: when Christ shall be fully glorified in his saints, and they everlastingly filled with the fulness of him that filleth all in all! Observe, 5. The glorious title here given to our Lord Jesus Christ, as head of his church. *He filleth all in all*; he filleth all persons, both angels and men; he filleth all places, heaven with glory, earth with grace, hell with horror; he filleth all ordinances, prayer with prevalence, preaching with efficacy, &c. he filleth all relations, fathers with paternal affections, mothers with maternal bowels; he fills all conditions, riches with thankfulness, poverty with contentment.

CHAP. II.

The design and scope of our holy apostle in this chapter, is to set forth before the Ephesians the happiness of that state and condition which, by their embracing Christianity, upon the preaching of the gospel, they were brought into; to which end and purpose, he shows them the deplorable misery of their former condition, before conversion; declaring, that their natural heathenish estate, was a state of spiritual darkness, yea, of spiritual death, they being dead in trespasses and sins. In which they, and the whole heathen world with them, did generally then lie, before the publishing of the gospel, as appeared by their manifold idolatries, which the grace of the gospel had both convinced them of and turned them from. Accordingly the apostle thus bespeaks them:

AND you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins:

Observe here, 1. The deplorable condition which the Ephesians were in by nature, and all persons with them before their conversion from sin to God. It is a state of spiritual death; the natural and unregenerate man is a dead man, spiritually dead in sin. Our apostle doth not say they were in a dying, but in a dead condition; not half dead, but altogether dead. But how so? Not dead as to natural actions, they can eat and drink; not as to rational actions, they can reason and discourse; not as to civil actions, they can buy and sell, bargain and trade. Nor is the natural man dead to moral actions; he can pray, read, and hear the word, meditate upon it, and discourse of it; if he please, he can hearken to the voice of God's judgments, consider and call his own ways to remembrance. But as to spiritual acts, to be spiritually performed, here he is dead, till quickened by a vital act of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to enlighten blind eyes, and whose delight it is to quicken and enliven dead souls. But what doth this state of spiritual death imply? *Answer*, It doth suppose and imply a state of separation from God, insensibility of that dismal state, an impotency and inability to recover ourselves out of that condition, and our loathsomeness and offensiveness to Almighty God, whilst we continue in it. In short, every unregenerate man is a dead man, in a double sense. He is, 1. Legally dead, being under the condemnatory sentence of the law; we call a man under the sentence of death, a dead man. 2. Spiritually dead, as being destitute of a principle of spiritual life, a quickening principle to enable the soul to perform spiritual operations. Thus before regeneration are we dead, in opposition to justification: and dead in opposition to sanctification also; and the fatal instrument, by which our souls die, is here discovered, dead in or by *trespasses and sins*. This is the sword that kills souls, and cuts them off from God. *You hath he quickened, being dead in trespasses and sins*. Observe, 2. The choice and singular privilege and favour vouchsafed to the Ephesians, in and under the power of spiritual death; they were *quickened*; that is, made spiritually alive by the quickening or life-giving power of the Spirit of God. A regenerate man is a living man; he lives a life of justification, which consists in pardon of sin. A condemned man's pardon is his life; and he lives a life of sanctification, having received from the Holy Spirit a vital principle of grace in all the powers and faculties of the soul: justification reconciles God to us, sanctification recon-

ciles us to God; justification takes away the legal enmity, sanctification the natural enmity between God and us. Here note, That the person who is spiritually quickened, is universally quickened; there is not a faculty in the soul but is spiritually dead, and therefore not a faculty but must be spiritually quickened. As there is an universal pollution in every faculty, so must there be an universal renovation; for no spiritual duty can be performed without it, no spiritual privilege can be enjoyed without it, and we can never be saved hereafter, if not spiritually quickened here: but if quickened aright, we live a divine life, the life (in some measure) which God himself lives; and this must needs be an excellent life and a pleasant life here on earth, and shall be an everlasting life with Christ in heaven: *Whoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die*. Observe, 3. The person quickening described: *You hath he quickened*; that is, God the Father, who, chap. i. 17, is said to have given them the *spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of himself*. Man, in his natural state considered, is unable of himself to quicken himself; he doth not so much as desire the quickening grace of God, till God gives the grace of desire. Alas! the understanding is naturally so blind, the heart so hard, and the will so stout and stubborn, that none but a divine power can enlighten the one, and efficaciously incline the other: it is a change of stone into flesh, of a dead sinner into a living saint. A change from nature to grace requires as much or more divine power, than a change from grace to glory. To see a creature naturally filthy, now to delight in purity; to see a sinner that by nature drinks in iniquity like water, now thirsting after righteousness; to see a man that loathed the holy law and holy ways of God, now longing to walk in them, and to come to an exact conformity to God in them; these acts are above nature, contrary to nature, and consequently the God of grace is the author of them: *You hath he quickened*.

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Our apostle having in the former verse described the Ephesians by their natural state and inward condition, as dead in trespasses and sins, doth in this verse set forth their misery in respect of their outward conversation; they walked in and

made a constant trade of sin. *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, &c.* Here note, 1. Their constant and continued course of life, set forth by *walking*; a metaphor frequently used in scripture, to set forth the tenor of a person's conversation; *wherein*, that is, in which sins in time past ye walked. Note, 2. The path in which they walked, in sins and trespasses; this denotes the abundance of sin that was in them, and committed by them with facility and ease, with satisfaction and delight. Walking is a motion, a voluntary motion, a progressive motion, a pleasant and delightful motion: it is natural to men, whilst unregenerate, to walk in sin with some sort of delight and pleasure; but alas! it is the pleasure of the beast, and not of the man, a sensual, and not a rational satisfaction. Note, 3. The guides which they are said here to follow: the world and Satan. 1. The world; that is, the corrupt course and sinful customs of the men of the world, according to the time and place in which they live; for though the world alters in the course and fashion of it, from time to time, yet it is, and ever will be, the world still; and the unregenerate part of mankind, will always walk according to the course of this world. The second guide which the Ephesians followed, was Satan, styled here a *prince*, in regard of that mighty power which he has in and over the men of the world; and the *prince of the power of the air*, because he exercises his power (by God's permission) in the lower regions of the air. All the elements and meteors stoop to his direction; when God gives him leave he can command the fire, the water, the winds, the thunders; all these powers that are in the air he can command, and therefore he is called their *prince*; yet here is a matter of comfort to us, Satan is the prince of the air only; if so, when the air shall cease, his kingdom shall cease; when the world is ended, his dominion and power is ended. Again, there is farther comfort in this, Satan is prince of the air, but Christ is prince of heaven and earth, and the air too: both our prayers whilst we live, and our souls when we die, pass through the air, but Satan can neither intercept the one, nor stop the other, in their passage thither. Christ, when he ascended into heaven, went through the air, this kingdom of devils, and spoiled their principalities and powers; he entered heaven in the sight of them all, and led them all captives in triumph at his chariot, so that they shall never hurt the souls of his people, nor ever keep them from heaven. Again, the

devil is here described by the influence he has upon the minds of sinners: *he works in the children of disobedience*. Satan's way of working in and upon obstinate and impenitent sinners, is very powerful and efficacious. Hence it is said here, 1. That they are led by Satan, *they walk according to the prince of the power of the air*; that is, according to his guidance, according to his mind and will. He has them at his beck; he says to one sinner, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh. 2. They are excited and assisted by Satan: *he works in them*, and suggests evil thoughts to them; he filled the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to lie unto the Holy Ghost; he put a lie first into their hearts, and then into their mouths. Now from hence we may infer, that the Holy Spirit of God doth always inwardly work in pious persons, enabling them to will and to do according to his own good pleasure. For it is unreasonable to conceive that the evil spirit should have more power over the children of disobedience, in whom he dwells, than the good Spirit has in those pious persons, in whose hearts he is said to dwell. Surely the Spirit of God doth more to the saving of souls, than the devil can do to the damning of them.

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Our apostle in these words is supposed to set forth the condition of the Jews by nature, as he had done before of the Gentiles; and that he declares, that even they had their conversation amongst the number of disobedient persons, and were no less obstinately rebellious against God than the disobedient Gentiles, following the motions of their corrupt lusts and vile affections; nay, he affirms roundly, concerning himself and all the Jews, without exception, that as to their way and course, whilst unregenerate, they did whatsoever their corrupt minds willed, liked, and inclined to; and as to their state, *were by nature children of wrath, as much as others*; yea, even as much as the despised Gentiles were. Here note, 1. The case of all men, Jews and Gentiles, alike described, children of wrath; that is, our estate and course is such by nature as deserves destruction, as tends to and will end in destruction, without the renewing grace of God. Note, 2. The rise of this case, expressed by *nature*; which implies, 1. The term from which

this commences, namely, from the first receiving of our beings and natures from our immediate parents, and together with the depravation of our natures we received an obnoxiousness to the wrath and curse of God. 2. It implies the ground for which this wrath doth impend and hang over us, namely, for that depravity of nature which since the fall is found with us. Learn hence, 1. That original corruption is universal to all mankind, both Jew and Gentile. 2. That this original corruption leads to, and will lodge under, eternal wrath, every person in whom regeneration and transplantation into Christ are not found: *We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; (by grace ye are saved;)

St. Paul having set forth that miserable state, which both Jews and Gentiles were in by nature, namely, *dead in sins, and children of wrath*; he doth next set forth their deliverance from that woful estate, by the rich mercy and free grace of God: *God, who is rich in mercy, &c.* Here observe, 1. The author of our deliverance, *God*; and the moving or impulsive cause of it, *rich mercy and great love*. Where note, That God hath done more for us, infinitely more, than he did for the angels: he showed love to them, but mercy to us; they are vessels of honour, but we are vessels of mercy: the object of mercy, is a creature in distress and misery. Note farther, That all the attributes in God are subjected to his love; this is the great prevailing attribute which sways all the rest: which way love goes, all attributes go; mercy, power, justice, and wisdom, they all work in subordination to love, they are at all love's beck, and love sets them all on work for the good and benefit of the object loved. Note, 3. That the love which God bears to the children of men, is a *great love*; and the mercy which was set on work by it, is *rich mercy*; his love so great, that it can never be expressed; his mercy so rich, that it can never be conceived: rich mercy is abundant mercy, inconceivable mercy, inexhaustible mercy, sure mercy. Note, 4. The blessed effects and fruits of this great love and rich mercy in God towards the Ephesians, in quickening them when dead, in saving them when lost, in doing all things for them when they had undone themselves; *God, who is rich in mercy—even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us*

together with Christ. Learn hence, That poor lost sinners do stand in need of all the riches of mercy that are in God, in order to their regeneration and salvation: if ever we be saved, it is the riches of mercy that must save us. Note, 5. How the apostle ascribes the whole work of their salvation to God's free grace, in opposition to any merit or worth in the persons to be saved: *By grace ye are saved.* Learn hence, That the dependency our salvation has in the whole, and in all the parts of it, upon the free grace of God, is the great thing which St. Paul delighted to discover and make known to us here: *By grace ye are saved*; and he asserts it again, verse 8. *By grace, &c.*

6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;

The apostle here instances in two branches more of that salvation which he had in the foregoing verse affirmed to be of grace, namely, that of our resurrection and glorification; both which are yet to come, and yet they are spoken of as already past: when the Father raised and glorified Christ, all believers were raised and glorified in him; for in his resurrection and glorification he did sustain the quality of a public person, representing his whole church as their head and husband; and, accordingly, believers are and may be said to be raised already, and glorified already, not in their own persons, but in Christ their head. The apostle says, *God has raised us up, and has made us sit together*; not, *he shall raise us, and will make us sit*; to denote the dependency which our resurrection and glorification has upon Christ's, as the effects depend upon the cause, and also the undoubted certainty that they shall come to pass, Christ's resurrection and glorification being a pledge of ours. Learn hence, 1. That Christ rose from the dead, and ascended up into heaven, not as a private person, but as the common head and parent, root and representative of his church and people; so that what he has done, they may be said to have done: they rose in him, and are set down in heaven in him; and blessed be God for the well-grounded hopes, that as we now sit together in Christ, so ere long we shall for ever sit together with Christ. Learn, 2. That Jesus Christ is the cause of our resurrection and glorification, he is the efficient cause, the meritorious cause, and exemplary cause, of our resurrection and glorification. Learn, 3. From the phrase here used of *sitting*, and of *sitting together in Christ*, that believers shall

certainly partake of the same kingly state and dignity, of the same honour and glory, of the same delight and pleasure, of the same rest and tranquillity, of the same state and security, with Christ in heaven. *He hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

7 That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus.

These words are expressive of the final cause, or special end, of that salvation which God propounded in his gracious workings upon the hearts of these Ephesians; namely, that in all present and succeeding ages, to the end of the world, he might give a convincing proof and example of the exceeding riches of his grace, for the encouragement of the greatest sinners to hope for mercy in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. Learn hence, That the instances and examples of God's mercy, grace, and goodness, love and kindness, towards lost sinners, in one age, are and ought to be an encouragement to future generations to hope in the same mercy, to draw nigh to the same fountain of rich grace, for pardon of sin, and salvation by Christ. O! when we consider that others as unworthy as ourselves (these Ephesians, for instance) have been admitted to the participation of such divine favours, Lord, what encouragement is it to us, and to others, to venture our salvation upon the same grace! Verily, the primitive Christians were intended by God as patterns of grace to succeeding Christians; nay, God did not only design them as patterns, but as pledges, that he would go on as he had begun, in after-ages to magnify the riches of his grace, in the conversion of the vilest and worst of sinners.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

In these words our apostle informs the Ephesians, and in them all succeeding Christians, that their complete salvation, from the first to the last, from the lowest to the highest step, depends upon God's free favour and grace in Christ, and not upon any merit or desert in ourselves; works having no meritorious or causal influence upon our salvation, (for they are not causes, but effects, of that grace by which we are saved,) to the intent that all boasting may be excluded, and that all the saints' glorying may be in God, and not in themselves. Note here, 1. That believers

are saved already, in some sense; not only because they have salvation begun in their new birth here, but they have already a right and title to, yea, a pledge and an earnest of, complete salvation; believers are saved here. Note, 2. That the believers' salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ. Note, 3. That faith, by and through which they are said to be saved, is not of themselves, it is the gift of God; faith is the gift of God as well as Jesus Christ, and the one as necessary as the other; for as the only way to heaven is by Christ, so the only way to Christ is by faith; as sin has put a vanity into the creature, so unbelief puts a vanity in Christ, that he should profit us nothing. Wrestle we then with God in prayer for a believing heart.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Our apostle having in the foregoing verses asserted the whole of our salvation to be of grace, and not of works, lest by magnifying of grace he should seem wholly to set aside good works, and the necessity of a holy life; he declares in this verse, that christians are ordained to them, created and prepared for them, and consequently they are effects flowing from grace, though not causes producing grace. *We are his workmanship*; 1. In our natural capacity, as men. 2. In our civil capacity, as such or such men, high or low, rich or poor. 3. In our spiritual capacity, as saints; this is intended here: believers are God's workmanship, as such, by supernatural renovation and spiritual regeneration; they are not only once made, as other persons, but they are new made, as saints; not by receiving new faculties, but new qualities; for grace is not a substantial, but a qualitative, change. Lord, as we are all thy workmanship by natural creation, let us be so by gracious renovation likewise! *Created in Christ Jesus unto good works*. Observe here, 1. The manner of this workmanship, *created*: this denotes two things; 1. That in their new making, they were intended to good works: this was God's mind and meaning in fore-ordaining that they should walk in them. 2. That in their new making they were fitted and prepared for good works, therefore did they receive a new nature from God, new principles, new affections, new dispositions, and inclinations, on purpose to fit them for an holy life, fruitful in good works. Here note, That as good works are antecedently necessary to salvation, so

renewing grace is absolutely necessary to good works; therefore before there can be a good work, there must be a good workman, and that good workman must be God's workmanship, created anew through the power of God. Observe, 2. The meritorious cause of this spiritual workmanship; and that is, Christ Jesus; *We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus*; that is, through the intervening mediation of Christ Jesus. The life which we live in this new creation state, namely, a life of holiness, it is purchased by his death, produced by his Spirit; all spiritual life comes from God, through Christ as a Mediator; he is a quickening head and life-giving spirit; 1 John iv. 9. *God sent his Son that we might live by him*; Christ is first our ransom, and then the fountain of life unto our souls: *created in Christ Jesus*. Observe, 3. The final cause of this divine workmanship; and that is, to *good works*: all those that are new creatures are created unto good works; so that a holy life is the necessary fruit of their new creation. New creatures are not to live idly, much less to live wickedly; but to make conscience of every duty, to bring forth fruit of piety towards God, of righteousness towards our neighbour, of love and universal charity towards all mankind. *Which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*: that is, God hath before prepared these works for us, and also prepared us for them; he has prepared these works for us, first by his decree and purpose; he that ordained the end, salvation, hath appointed good works as the means thereto, by his precept and command. Mic. vi. 8. *He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, &c.* And as God hath prepared these works for us, so he hath prepared us for them by his Holy Spirit, making our hearts fit for our work, by enlightening our minds, and inclining our wills. Learn hence, That new creatures are both ordained and obliged to, and also fitted and prepared for, good works: God will have his children distinguished from others by the good they do, as well as the devil's children are characterized by the mischief which they do. Observe, lastly, The constancy of the christian's duty declared, with reference to good works: he is *to walk in them*. Now, walking denotes and implies both a way and action. *Walking*, 1. It implies a way; and intimates plainly to us, that good works are the way and means to obtain salvation: we can never come at heaven as the end, but by walking in the path of good works as the way and means. 2. An action: *walking* denotes spontaneity in the principle, progress and perseverance in

the motion; he that walks, goes forward, gets ground, gives not over till he comes to his journey's end. A good man is as diligent and zealous, as constant and persevering, in good works as if he were to be saved for them and by them; and at the same time relies by faith on the merits of the Mediator for his acceptance with God, renouncing all confidence in his own good works; he knows they cannot justify themselves, much less can they justify him, who has a better righteousness than that of his best obedience, to denominate him righteous in the sight of God. Thus are we *God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works*; which God had before ordained that we should walk in them.

11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

Our apostle doth two things in these two verses, namely, 1. He calls upon the Ephesians to remember their former miserable condition before conversion, when they were in their heathen and unregenerate state, when they were Gentiles and reproached by the Jews for being uncircumcised, and looked upon by the Jews as dogs; he calls upon them here, to remember their obligations to God, for bringing them out of this miserable state and deplorable condition; *Remember, that in times past, ye were Gentiles in the flesh*. Learn hence, That believers, remembering and calling to mind the sin they were guilty of, and the misery they were exposed to, in their natural and unregenerate state, may many ways be of singular use and advantage to them, and be spiritually improved by them; namely, thus, 1. To excite us to magnify the greatness of God's love, and to admire the freeness and riches of his grace. This we shall certainly do, when we remember, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. 2. To inflame our love to Jesus Christ: Mary loved much, when she remembered that much was forgiven her. 3. To increase our godly sorrow for sin: *Then shall they be confounded* when they remember that *I am pacified towards them for all their abominations*, Ezek. xvi. 63. 4. To quicken us up

to greater zeal and industry for God: it was the remembrance of what Paul was before conversion, that fired him with holy zeal, and carried him forth with such vigour and industry after his conversion, that he laboured more abundantly than all the apostles. 5. The remembrance how bad we were ourselves before conversion, will be a special mean to keep up our hearts in hopes of, in prayers for, and endeavours after the conversion of others, though very bad at present. *What they are, that thou once wert; and what thou now art, that they may also be.* Observe, 2. That as St. Paul does put the Ephesians in mind of their former miserable condition, in their heathenish and unregenerate state; so he does particularize the same, and branch it forth into its distinct parts and members. When they were unconverted Gentiles, 1. *They were without Christ*, that is, without the knowledge of Christ, without any relation to him, or interest in him, without union and communion with him, without any communications of life and light, of grace and holiness, of joy and comfort, of pardon and protection, received from him. They did not discern any excellency, nor taste any sweetness, in Christ; and consequently had no love to him, no longings after him, no delight or satisfaction in him. Ah! miserable condition of a Christless soul: if thou art without Christ, thou art without the spirit and grace of Christ, to enlighten thee, to quicken thee, to sanctify and save thee. 2. *They were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*: that is, they were no members of Christ's church, either visible or invisible: they did not so much as profess themselves to be a people, that stood in any relation to God; they were unchurched Gentiles; for in *Jewry only was God known*, and his name great in Israel, *Psa. lxxvi.* 1. Verily, whatever the world thinks of it, it is a very great favour from God to be born within the pale of the visible church, and to have communion with her; for thereby we partake of many excellent privileges; namely, the word and sacraments, the communion of saints, together with the offers of Christ, and salvation by him. 3. *They were strangers to the covenant of promise*; that is, to the covenant of grace, first made with Adam after the fall, then with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, afterwards with Israel upon Mount Sinai; for which reason it is here by the apostle called *covenants*, in the plural number, though it was always one and the same covenant in substance; and its being called the *covenants of promise*, seems to point at the promise made to Adam, *Gen.*

iii. 15. that first grand original promise, of which promise all the following promises were but branches, or more full explanations. Now the Ephesians are here said to be strangers to the covenant of promise; because, as Gentiles, this covenant was never revealed to them, nor any offer of it made by the ministry of the word, and consequently they could have no actual interest in the blessings and privileges of it. This intimates to us, that for men to live and die without an offer of the covenant of grace made unto them, is a woeful, sad, and dangerous condition, because their salvation is rendered in an ordinary way impossible, forasmuch as the terms upon which salvation may be had are concealed from them. 4. They were *without hope*; that is, they were without the grace of hope, and without the means of hope: they were without hopes of redemption, without hopes of pardon and reconciliation, and consequently without any well-grounded hope of eternal life and salvation. Such as are Christless, must be hopeless; such as are without faith, must needs be without hope; and such as are without the promise, must necessarily be without faith: for the promise is the ground of faith, and faith is the ground of hope. Learn, That for a person to be without a well-grounded hope of future happiness, is a very deplorable case and condition; but all such as are without the pale of the Christian church, without the bond of the covenant of grace, without the offer of a Saviour in the gospel, they must be without hope, even in this life, and so are of all men most miserable. 5. They were *without God in the world*; that is, without the knowledge of the true God, without worshipping of him as God, without any affiance or trust in him, without performing any obedience to him: not that the Ephesians, and other heathens, lived without all sense of a Deity, for they worshipped false gods abundantly, but they lived without any sense or sensible apprehension of the majesty and holiness of the true God: now, this is to live without God in the world; and verily such a life is worse than death. The apostle calls all the Gentiles, not only the barbarous and savage, but the best polished and civilized nations, *Adeos, Atheists*, because they wanted the right knowledge of God by and through a Mediator: there is no knowing God acceptably, except we know him in Christ, and approach unto him by Christ. In this affecting manner doth our apostle set before the Ephesians their dark and dismal state whilst Gentiles, and before brought into the Christian church by preaching the gospel of Christ.

unto them; they were *without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.* God grant that every unregenerate sinner may think of it till his heart and soul are affected with it.

13 But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

The apostle having set before the Ephesians the black and dark part of their lives, before their conversion to Christianity, in the foregoing verse; comes here in this to acquaint them with the blessed change which was made in their state, and by whom. Now, says he, in or by Christ Jesus, ye, who were sometimes afar off, namely, from Christ, his church, his covenant, from saving hope, and from God himself, are made as nigh as the Jews, and have as much right to expect the aforesaid benefits as they, the blood of Christ having purchased them for you, and sealed them to you; *Ye that were before afar off, are now made nigh by the blood of Christ.* Where, note, That persons who are most remote, and at the farthest distance from God, are sometimes unexpectedly brought home unto him: *Ye, who were afar off, are now made nigh.* Note, 2. That it is owing to the blood of Christ, to his death and sufferings, that any soul is brought into a state of nearness unto God, and finds acceptance with him: *Ye are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace:

He is our peace: that is, 1. He is the Mediator of our peace, the great peace-maker betwixt God and men. 2. *He is our peace:* that is, the purchaser of our peace. 3. *He is our peace;* that is, the establisher of our peace. All which is to be understood, not only of peace betwixt God and man, but also betwixt man and man. *Who hath made both one;* that is, both Jews and Gentiles one church. Here note, That there was a very great and deep-rooted enmity betwixt Jews and Gentiles, until Christ purchased their peace and reconciliation. The Jews derided, scorned, and hated the Gentiles as unclean, compared them to dogs and

swine. The Gentiles, they reproached the Jews for circumcising their flesh, esteemed them, of all nations, the worst; and would hold their nose at the Jews when they met them, and cry, *O fatentes Judæi!* O ye stinking Jews! and turn away their eyes from them. Learn from hence then, That the uniting of both Jew and Gentile into one church, was one blessed effect and sweet fruit of the purchase of Christ's blood; Christ's offering of himself was intended as a sacrifice for enmities between man and man, as well as for enmities between God and man: *He is our peace, who hath made both one.* Observe next, What Christ hath done in order to his making peace between Jew and Gentile; 1. He has abolished the ceremonial law, called here a *partition-wall*, betwixt the Jews and the Gentiles; in allusion, no doubt, to that wall to Solomon's temple which separated the court of the Jews from that of the Gentiles, that they could neither come at, nor look at one another. So that this partition-wall being said to be broken down, intimates to us, that Jew and Gentile, who before had two manner of religions, the one in and under a covenant with God, the other afar off, and without God; yet now by Christ are both adopted into the same church, partakers of the same covenants, incorporated into the same faith, entitled to the same glory. 2. Christ has abolished the enmity and perpetual strife which was occasioned between Jew and Gentile, upon the account of the observation of the ceremonial law, and the ordinances thereunto belonging: *He hath abolished the enmity;* that is, the ceremonial law, which made the enmity between them. The ceremonial law was the cause and the continuer of that enmity which was betwixt Jew and Gentile: this is called *the law of commandments contained in ordinances:* because Almighty God did actually separate the Jews from all the world, by giving them ordinances and commandments, judicial and ceremonial laws, containing many visible and external observances, which forbade them to communicate with the Gentile world. Now Christ being come in the flesh, all those observances ceased, and those legal ordinances vanished away; all nations become blessed in Christ, and Jews and Gentiles become one church, both alike the people of God, both admitted equally into covenant, and both alike blessed. Here note, That the moral law, summarily comprised and comprehended in the *Ten Commandments*, was no part of the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile. Nor did the death of Christ abrogate this law, nor is it at all abolished: but it

was the law of ceremonies only, which the sufferings and death of Christ put an end unto; for when he died, they all vanished; as the shadow disappears when the substance is come.

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

1. Our apostle had declared in the foregoing verses, that one end of Christ's death was, to make peace between Jew and Gentile; here he assures us, a second end was, to make peace between God and man, that he might reconcile both Jew and Gentile, thus united, to an offended God. This he did by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross; whereby he did destroy that enmity which was betwixt God and man, by undergoing the punishment of sin, the cause of that enmity. Learn hence, That in order to our reconciliation with God, and being at peace with him, a price was paid by Christ upon the cross, to satisfy divine justice, and atone divine displeasure. Observe next, that Christ's having purchased peace, he came and preached peace to both Jews and Gentiles; to the Gentiles, said here to be *afar off*, and to the Jews, that were *nigh*. But how did Christ preach to the Gentiles? Where do we read that he ever did so! *Ans.* Though he did not in his own person preach peace to the Gentiles, yet he gave commission to the apostles to preach to them, *Matt. xxviii.* and they and their successors, pursuant to such commission, did preach peace unto them, even to them that were *afar off*, and to them that were *nigh*. Learn hence, That when the ministers of Christ do come in his name, and by a commission received from him, to preach peace, and offer terms of reconciliation unto lost sinners, it is all one as if Christ himself did come and preach; he expects the same readiness from them in receiving the message, as if it were delivered to them from his own mouth; and will treat the despisers of his ministers, and the contemners of their message, as if the affront were offered immediately to his own person. Observe, 3. The apostle's argument to prove that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, were effectually called, by the preaching of the gospel, to partake of peace and reconciliation with God; because they had both equal access and liberty to approach unto God

in all holy duties, as unto a Father, by the manuduction of the Spirit: *Through him*, that is, through Jesus Christ, we, both Jews and Gentiles, have access, that is, liberty of approach, by one and the same Spirit, unto the Father. Learn hence, That through Jesus Christ, all believers, of what denomination soever, have access to God by the Spirit of grace. *Quest.* What doth this access to the Father denote? *Ans.* It supposes a distance between God and us, both a natural and a moral distance, as creatures and as sinners: it denotes a propinquity and nearness unto God, in opposition to this distance; and that our approach to God is free and voluntary, friendly and complacential, peculiar and privilegeous, fruitful and advantageous. *Quest.* 2. In what respects have believers access to God as to a Father? *Ans.* In this life they have access to the Father's heart and love, to the Father's ear and audience, to the Father's care and protection; to his providing care, to his guiding and counseling care, to his comforting and supporting care, but especially to his sanctifying care. *Quest.* 3. Through whom have we this access to God? *Ans.* Through Jesus Christ, through his mediation and manuduction, we have access to God's heart, to God's ear, to his fatherly care on earth, and to his gracious presence in heaven. *Quest.* 4. What influence gives the Holy Spirit unto this access unto the Father? *Ans.* It is by his influence that they are at first brought home to the Father: he prepares them for this access unto the Father: he stirs up holy affections, and enkindles holy desires, in them after God, and helps them to make improvement, an holy, fruitful, and advantageous improvement, of all their access unto God.

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; 21 In whom all the building, fully framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Our apostle began this chapter with setting before the Ephesians the horror and dread of the heathenish state before converted to Christianity: here he closes the chapter with an account of that glorious and blessed state, which the Chris-

tian religion, embraced by them, had translated them into: *Now ye are no more strangers, but fellow-citizens, &c.* Where observe, 1. Their present happy condition is set forth both negatively and positively: negatively, by showing what they were not, neither *strangers nor foreigners*, but freemen and *fellow-citizens, &c.* Where it must be remembered, that all the nations of the world, except the Jews, were called strangers to the God of Israel; but the Jews were called *propinqui*, his neighbours, or near ones: but, says the apostle, there is now no such difference; for the believing Gentiles are equally admitted with the believing Jews to the privileges of the new Jerusalem, and are fellow-citizens with one another; they are no longer aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, but free men. Observe, 2. The apostle sets forth their happy condition positively, under a threefold similitude; namely, that of a city, that of an household or family, and that of an edifice or building. Note, 1. Our apostle compares the Christian church (of which the Ephesians now were members) to a city; and shows, that themselves, as believing Gentiles, had a right to all the privileges and immunities of that city, as well as the Jews, who accounted themselves the only free members of it. *Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints*; that is, the patriarchs and prophets, and all other members of the church of the Jews; ye are free denizens, burgesses, and enfranchized citizens, with the rest of that holy society; ye are all members of the holy catholic church. Note, 2. Our apostle compares the Christian church to an household or family: *Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.* Now, this metaphor intimates a greater degree of nearness to, and communion with, the church, than what the former metaphor did imply, there being a straiter tie of familiarity and friendship between the members of a family, than between the members of a city. Whence we learn, That the church of Christ under the gospel, is God's great household or family, in a peculiar manner admitted to an intimate communion with him, in a special way provided and cared for by him; and every sincere Christian becomes a member of this blessed family, and enjoys all the privileges thereof: *Ye are all fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.* Note, 3. St. Paul proceeds yet farther, and compares the church of Christ to an edifice or stately building: *Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, &c.* Now this similitude holds forth unto us a still farther degree of nearness to,

and communion with, God and his church, than the former. What can be more closely united, and more strictly joined together, than stones in a building? And our apostle calling the church an holy temple, seems to allude to Solomon's temple, which was a type of the Christian church, as the tabernacle was of the Jewish church. The tabernacle was ambulatory and changeable, made of decaying and corruptible materials, and so fitly typified the Jewish dispensation, which was temporary and transient; but the temple was made of durable rich materials, and thereby a proper type of the Christian church, which is called a *kingdom that cannot be shaken*. But observe further, How our apostle doth describe this stately edifice, this spiritual building, the Christian church, these several ways: 1. By its foundation which it stands upon, namely, the apostles and prophets; that is, upon the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, not upon their persons: Christ himself being the personal foundation and chief corner-stone. Learn, That though Christ himself be the builder of, and the chief corner-stone in, his church, yet he employs his ministers now, as he did the prophets and apostles of old, to lay the foundation, and carry on the superstructure, and no one apostle had a privilege in this above another; and therefore for the pope, as St. Peter's successor, to style himself, "the foundation of the Catholic church," is an impudent presumption; for no more is here said of Peter, than is said of all the apostles and prophets. 2. The church as a spiritual building or temple, is here described by the unity and compactness of its parts: *in whom all the building fitly framed together*; that is, all the members of the church are by faith firmly joined to Christ as the foundation, and to one another by love, and their unity is both their strength and their beauty. 3. This building is described by its worth and perpetual increase, *it groweth unto an holy temple*. The church groweth two ways, by an addition of new and particular converts, and by an addition of new graces in every particular convert. Where remark, how this spiritual edifice, the church of Christ, differs from all other buildings; both the whole of it, and all the individual parts of it, are endued with life, a life flowing from Christ the foundation, a life far from a state of perfection, *in whom all the building groweth*; all a Christian's life and spiritual growth flow from his union and communion with Christ; *in him all the building groweth*. 4. This building, namely, the Christian church, consisting both of Jews and Gen-

tiles, is here described by the end and design of Christ in erecting this growing edifice; namely, to be an *holy temple* unto God, wherein now (as in the material temple of old) he may manifest his gracious presence, and be perpetually worshipped, glorified, and served. The whole church, or collective body of believers jointly, and each believer severally and apart, are a spiritual and holy temple unto the Lord, in and by whom all spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered up, and all the duties of new and sincere obedience acceptably performed.

CHAP. III.

The design and scope of our apostle, in this chapter, is, to let the Ephesians know, that he was now a prisoner at Rome, for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles in general, and consequently that they (the Ephesians) had no cause to be offended at his present sufferings in particular, especially considering that his calling to that work and office was by divine revelation; and that he was not only extraordinarily called to it, but qualified and fitted for it. From all which considerations he exhorted them from fainting upon the score of his sufferings, which he gladly underwent for so good a cause, and in discharging so honourable an employment. Accordingly he thus bespeaks them:

FOR this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

For this cause, that is, for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles in general; and in particular, for asserting, that the privileges of justification and salvation by Christ belonged equally to the Gentiles as well as the Jews, though they were not circumcised; for this cause I was persecuted and imprisoned by the Jews. Where observe, The apostle styles himself Christ's prisoner; *I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ.* He was at once Christ's prisoner, the Jews' prisoner, the Romans' prisoner, the Gentiles' prisoner; Christ's prisoner, as suffering for his gospel; the Jews' prisoner, as suffering by their accusation; the Romans' prisoner, as suffering by their sentence: the Gentiles' prisoner, as suffering for his labours in order to their salvation. Lord! what a title of honour is here put upon the apostle! *I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ.* His imprisonment for Christ was verily a greater honour, and matter of higher glorying, than his rapture into the third heavens.

2 (If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward: 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words,

Observe here, 1. The title given to the

gospel, it is styled *the grace of God*; partly because the glad tidings which the gospel brings are the effect and product of God's grace and favour, and partly because the gospel is the instrument and means of working grace in the souls of persons. Observe, 2. The title given to St. Paul's apostleship; he styles it *the dispensation of the grace of God*, because God had commissioned him to declare and dispense the gospel of grace to them; Christ's ministers are the dispensers of his mind to the children of men. Observe, 3. The title here given to the calling of the Gentiles: he styles it a *mystery*. The calling of the Gentiles to salvation by faith in Christ, without the works of the law, was a mystery hid from ages. Observe, 4. The way and manner how St. Paul came by the knowledge of this mystery: it was by divine revelation from heaven, ver. 3. *How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery.* The mystery of man's redemption in general, and of the calling of the Gentiles in particular to the participation of that grace, was made known by divine revelation to the apostles by God himself. The truth is, the redemption of a lost world, by the incarnation, death, and passion, of the Son of God, is so stupendous and surprising, so wonderful and amazing, that the very thoughts of it had been the highest blasphemy, if God himself had not revealed it.

4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ;) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel;

Our apostle here proceeds in setting forth this great mystery of man's redemption in general, and the calling of the Gentiles in particular: he styles it a *mystery*. 1. Now a mystery is a purpose and decree of God, unknown to, and unsearchable by, man, unless first by revelation discovered and made known by God himself; such a mystery was the whole gospel in general, and this article concerning the calling of the Gentiles in particular. 2. St. Paul styles it a mystery, *in other ages* of the church, *not made known*, that is, not so plainly and clearly, unto the sons of men, Jews or Gentiles; for the calling of the Gentiles was foretold and prophesied of,

under the Old Testament, but darkly and obscurely; the time when, the manner how, and the means by which, were not understood, till now the Holy Spirit of God revealed it to the apostles and evangelical prophets under the New Testament. 3. The apostle amplifies and sets forth the glorious excellency of that mystery which here he had made mention of; namely, that the Gentiles should have access into the church without an entrance by the door of circumcision, be joint-heirs of the heavenly inheritance with all believers, and together with the Jews taken into the bond of the covenant; and finally, that they were brought into this happy estate by the preaching of the gospel, and by believing and obeying of it. Learn hence, That the calling of the neglected and despised Gentiles to the knowledge of Christ, and participation of gospel privileges with the Jews, was a great mystery, awfully to be admired, and a glorious mercy, with all thankfulness to be acknowledged, *That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs of the same body, &c.*

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9 And to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

As if the apostle had said, "Of this gospel it pleased God to make me a successful minister or dispenser, furnishing me with ordinary and extraordinary gifts and graces from his Holy Spirit, for that weighty work and service; unto me, even unto me, I say, was this special favour granted, though unworthy, (being *less than the least* of all saints, because once a great persecutor,) yet unto me was the apostolic office committed, to preach unto the Gentiles the incomparable and incomprehensible riches of God's mercy towards them in Christ, in receiving them fully, freely and finally, in covenant with himself; and to make known unto all men what is the communion or fellowship of this mystery, namely, that the Gentiles with the Jews should have one faith, one Lord, one hope, one heavenly inheritance; which was a mystery hid in the secret intention and decree of God, until discovered by divine revelation. Ob-

serve here, 1. How careful the apostle was to assert his authority and apostolical commission, *I was made a minister*; and how he refers his calling immediately to the grace of God, *Unto me was this grace given*. It was the grace of God converted him, it was the grace of God revealed the gospel to him, and that called him to reveal it unto others. Observe, 2. How the apostle attributes the success of his ministry to the power of God, and not to his own endeavours; *By the effectual working of his own power*. The grace of God in him, and the power of God accompanying him, was effectual to the conversion of very many sinners, and to the producing of great signs and miracles which were wrought by him. Observe, 3. The noble subject of St. Paul's sermons, what it was he preached amongst the Gentiles; namely, the *unsearchable riches of Christ*. Riches imply abundance, and abundance of such things as are of worth and value: in Christ are riches, all riches, eminently and transcendently found; riches of grace, and riches of glory: and these are called *unsearchable*; not as if it were unlawful to search after them, but because after our utmost search after them we can never fully discover them. Learn hence, that there are such mazes, such mysteries of love and goodness, in our Lord Jesus Christ, as, though it be our duty to be continually searching after them, yet we can never, by our utmost searching, fully discover them and find them out. Observe, 4. The humble and low opinion which the great apostle had of himself, he styles himself, not barely the least, but *less than the least of all saints*: he was, in his own esteem, as little as could be, *less than the least*; a double diminutive; a comparative made, of a superlative. Thus he debases himself, upon consideration of his former enmity against Christ and his church: lower he could not lie than he lays himself, the greatest and chiefest of sinners; the least, yea, less than the least, of all saints; growth in grace, and increase in humility accompany one another.

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.

Observe here, 1. The title given to the holy angels; they are styled *principalities and powers*, because God makes us of their powerful ministry in governing the kingdoms and principalities of this world: and they are said to be in *heavenly places*: not as if they were never here upon earth below, but because the ordinary place of

their residence is heaven above. Observe, 2. That the angels are not omniscient and all knowing. The wisdom of God in the work of redemption was a secret unknown to the glorious angels; they did not know it until God made it known unto them. Observe, 3. That God did not make the mystery of the gospel, or the glorious work of redemption, known unto the angels immediately, but occasionally, by the revelation of it first to the church, and by the church to them: as if the apostles had said, "Had it not been for the light given to, and spread abroad in, the church, the angels had been in the dark about the mysteries of the gospel to this day. *By the church is made known unto the angels the manifold wisdom of God.*" *Quest.* But how could the church communicate this knowledge to angels? *Ans.* Either the angels did gather up their knowledge of these mysteries, by the ministry of the apostles preaching them to the world in a way of information; or else they saw, as in a glass, the manifold wisdom of God, and the dispensations of his mercy, grace, and goodness, towards his church, in a way of contemplation. Observe, 4. The title here given to the work of redemption, it is styled, *the manifold wisdom of God.* O, how full of variety was the wisdom of God in man's recovery! It is of many folds and plaits, manifold in kind, manifold in degree, manifold in its administration. There are manifold secrets in this wisdom: some less perfectly seen, some more perfectly understood, and some that will never perhaps be thoroughly understood. Doubtless, there are some secrets in the wisdom of God, which it belongs only to God to understand and know. Blessed be God that so much of the manifold wisdom of God, in the glorious work of redemption, is made known unto us, as will eternally ravish and delight us.

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: 12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. 13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Our apostle here shows, 1. That whatever the wisdom of God has done in the work of redemption, was from all eternity purposed to be done, and that our Lord Jesus Christ was the Person by whom God would in time execute his eternal purpose: *According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus.* Next, he shows the great and gracious privileges which all

believers are admitted to the participation of, by and through our Lord Jesus Christ; namely, boldness, access, and confidence: *In whom we have boldness, and access, with confidence, through the faith of him.* Access; that is, a liberty of approach to God as a Father: *Boldness*; that is, a freedom of speech in delivering our heart, our whole mind and heart, to him, in the duty of prayer and thanksgiving: *Confidence*; that is, a well-grounded persuasion that both our persons and performances shall find acceptance with God. All which privileges are enjoyed by the exercise of faith in Christ: *We have boldness, access, and confidence, through the faith of him.* Lastly, He exhorts them not to faint under or be discouraged at, his present sufferings, much less to backslide from christianity upon that account, seeing that his tribulations were both profitable, and also glorious and honourable: *I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.* Observe here, 1. That new converts to christianity are subject to faintings and drooping discouragements at the news of sufferings. Observe, 2. That persecution for the gospel of Christ is a trial, not only to those who are under it, but to those that hear of it. St. Paul here was more afraid of the Ephesians fainting under his sufferings, than he was of his own fainting, and therefore he doth carefully guard against it: *I desire you not to faint at my tribulations.* Observe, 3. That the persecutions and afflictions, the hardships and severities, which the ministers of Christ do for the most part endure and undergo, are for the sake of their people; they might shift off and shun the cross as well as other men, did not love to the souls of their people engage them to suffer the sharpest persecution for their sake: *I desire you faint not at my tribulation for you*; that is, for preaching the gospel to you. Observe, 4. From those words, *My tribulation, which is your glory*: so honourable it is to suffer for Christ, that not only the ministers of Christ themselves, who suffer, are thereby honoured, but the people of their charge also are greatly honoured thereby; in testifying God's high esteem of such a people in sending his ministers not only to teach and instruct them, but to suffer for them, yea, even to die for them. Which consideration ought not only to prevent our people's fainting at our sufferings, but should make them glory in them, and take encouragement from them: *My tribulation, saith St. Paul, is your glory.*

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ. 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

Our apostle having exhorted the Ephesians in the foregoing verse, not to faint at his tribulation for the gospel, here he puts up a most affectionate prayer to God for them on the same account: *For this cause*, and in order to this end, *I bow my knees*, &c. Now in this affectionate and most excellent prayer of the apostle, we have several particulars worthy of our notice and remark. As, 1. The humble gesture which the apostle used in his prayers, *I bow my knees*; thereby expressing the reverent frame of his heart in prayer. Learn hence, That the gestures which we use in prayer should be such as may best express our reverence of God, and denote our profound humility before him. Observe, 2. The person prayed to, God, under the appellation of a Father, and, in particular, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: *I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Blessed be God, that believers and Christ have one and the same father; he by nature, we by grace; he by eternal generation, we by gracious adoption. By virtue of this relation we may expect to be heard in prayer as Christ was, and to be helped in our distresses, as Christ was, and in God's good time to be possessed of the inheritance of children, as Christ is. Observe, 3. The title given to the church: it is styled God's family, his household: all the saints on earth, whether Jews or Gentiles, and all the glorified angels and saints in heaven, do make but one family. There is but one catholic or universal church, comprehending all its members both in heaven and earth: and all within the church are of one kindred and line, descended of one common Father; and his Family is named, that is, united under Christ, he being the head of all. Observe, 4. The mercy prayed for, ver. 16. *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man*. Where note, 1. The mercy itself: spiritual strength, strength in the inner man, to enable them to bear afflictions, to endure persecutions, to resist temptations, to grapple with all their spiritual enemies in the progress of their Christian course. Note, 2. The fountain from whence all spiritual strength flows; and that is, from the Holy Spirit; *Strengthened with might by his spirit*. It is the Holy spirit of God that constantly renews the believers strength, by upholding

and actuating their graces, which otherwise would fade and wither, would languish and die. So many and so mighty are our spiritual enemies, that we have to wrestle with and strive against, that except we be under prompt and strengthened by the almighty power of the Holy Spirit in the inner man, we cannot keep our ground, and much less get ground of our enemy, but shall become an easy prey to every temptation. Note, 3. The moving, impelling, or impulsive cause, from whence the foregoing mercy is expected to proceed and flow, namely, from the rich and glorious mercy of God: *God grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened*. In all our approaches to God for any blessings, especially for spiritual blessings, it is our duty to direct the eye of our faith to that inexhaustible fountain of rich mercy and almighty power, in God, whereby he is both able and willing to bestow upon us whatever is agreeable to his holy will: *God grant you according to the richness of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man*.

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Our apostle here proceeds with affectionate ardour to pray for further spiritual blessings on the behalf of his beloved Ephesians: 1. He prays that Christ may dwell in their hearts by his most holy faith. The phrase of *dwelling in us*, imports a very close and intimate union between Christ and believers; he dwells in them subjectively and effectively, by his gracious influences, by his powerful assistances, by his quickening impressions. The Holy Spirit is the bond of union on Christ's part, and faith on our part. 2. He prays that they may be rooted and grounded in love; that is, that they might be so deeply possessed with the sense of God's love, that they might find their hearts inflamed with love to God, and one towards another; and that love might be the very habit of their souls, and rooted nature in them. 3. He prays that the Ephesians may comprehend what is the breadth, length, depth, and height, of the love of God, and the mysteries of the gospel; intimating to us, that we are not to content ourselves with a superficial view of God's free love in

Christ, but to make an accurate inspection into all the dimensions of it: to view it in its breadth, as extending to all ages, Jewish and Christian; in its length, as reaching from eternity to eternity; in its depth, as it stoops down to succour and relieve the vilest and the greatest, if penitent sinners; in its height, whereby it reaches up to heaven, and entitles us to the joy and felicity of the saints above. Verily, the love of God in Christ to a lost world, is so vast and boundless, so rich and matchless, exceeding not only our comprehension, but conceptions also, that not only the natural man cannot understand it, but the renewed man also is unable to fathom it, but must be daily endeavouring to take dimensions of it; for the love of Christ surpassingly transcends the knowledge of the most illuminated believer; it surpasses natural knowledge, apostolical knowledge, yea, angelical knowledge. *That ye may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.* 4. He prays that they may know the superlative love of Christ, which surpasseth all human understanding and knowledge: implying that the love of Christ to a lost world is a transcendent love; that the knowledge of it may be attained in some measure, that it is our duty to seek after it, and search into it; but, after all, we can never fully comprehend it. What created understanding can know what is unknowable, or comprehend what is incomprehensible? Learn, There are such dimensions and degrees in the love of Christ to sinners, which, at least in this present and imperfect state, do surpass all comprehension and conception; also that love whereby he took our nature upon him, that love whereby he took our sins upon him, is so stupendous and amazing, that the holy angels awfully admire it, but even their enlarged capacities cannot fully comprehend it. 5. He prays that they might be filled with all the fulness of God; that is, with such measures of grace, knowledge, faith, holiness, and love, which God hath appointed believers unto, and they are capable of, in this life. Note here, 1. That there is a fulness in God, which we can neither be filled with, nor may we strive to be filled with; God is essentially full, originally full, independently full, inexhaustibly full, of all holiness and grace. Now this fulness of his is undiminishable, and consequently incommunicable. Note, 2. That there is a fulness of God which we may, and therefore ought, to pray and endeavour to be filled with; namely, to be filled with the knowledge

of God, to be filled with the grace and Spirit of God, to be filled with the wisdom of God, that we may know God more, serve him better, glorify him on earth, and be glorified with him in heaven. In a word, we may pray for, and strive to be filled with, such a measure of the fulness of God and his grace, as God shall see fit to give, and as our capacities are or may be prepared to receive; God is not straitened towards us, let us not be straitened in ourselves: *Open thy mouth wide, says God, and I will fill it.* Blessed be God for a present fulness of sufficiency, and for the hopes of a future fulness to satiety.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle closes his prayer with thanksgiving and praise; intimating to us, that praise should evermore conclude that work which prayer began, and that spiritual blessings principally deserve our praises. Observe, 2. The title which St. Paul's faith fixed upon, in his approaches to God in prayer and praise; and that is, his omnipotence or almighty power. In all our addresses to God, it is our duty to have such apprehensions, and use such expressions concerning him, as may most strengthen our faith. *He is able, saith the apostle, to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.* Note here, The comprehensive fulness of this expression: he is able to do for us, to do abundantly for us, to do exceeding abundantly for us, above what we ask; yea, to do exceeding abundantly for us above what we can think, as well as ask. O! how narrow, short, and poor are our prayers, compared with the power of God! It is much that the tongue can ask; it is more that the mind can think: but the Lord is able to do for us, not only above what we can ask, but abundantly above what we can think. Lord, what an everlasting spring of comfort is this! what encouragement doth it administer to thy people! what encouragement to prayer! what encouragement in prayer! They pray to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that they can ask or think. Observe, 3. That it is not God's absolute power that St. Paul bottoms his faith in prayer upon, (for God can do many things that he never will do,) but it is his operative, promised, and formerly experienced power. *According to the*

power that worketh in us; that is, according to that infinite and almighty power which God had exerted and put forth in their first conversion: this power was, and is, a main prop for confidence in prayer. Learn hence, That the experience we have had of God's gracious power in working in us, by converting and quickening grace, may and ought to confirm our faith, that he will do exceeding abundantly for us above what we can expect, yea, above what we can ask or think, when we are upon our knees in prayer before him. Observe, 4. The concluding doxology: *To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.* Where note, 1. The divine praise given to Almighty God, namely, that of *glory*: *To him be glory.*—Glory is the fountain of all excellency in the creatures; they all shine with beams borrowed from God's excellences, as stars shine with the light they receive from the body of the sun. Almighty God is that infinitely glorious being, in whom all the excellences and perfections of the creatures are eminently and transcendently found. Note, 2. The persons giving this glory unto God: the church, *To him be glory in the church.* True, it is the duty of all reasonable creatures to set forth God's glory; but only the church (holy and gracious persons alone) can perform it in an active and acceptable manner. Note, 3. The person through whom this duty becomes acceptable unto God: through Christ Jesus, *To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus.* The duty of praise and thanksgiving is what we owe to God for received favours, and indeed is all we have to pay him; but neither this, nor any other duty, can find acceptance with God, but by and through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Note, 4. The duration and continuance of this duty of thanksgiving: *Throughout all ages, world without end.* As God shall never want glory from his church, so there shall always be a church to the end of the world to give glory unto God, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. Note, lastly, In this divine doxology, after what manner, and with what affection, this praise is given, intimated in the word *Amen.* *World without end, Amen.* This *Amen*, 1. Is a note of assent, and as such used by the Jews and Christians in all ages at the end of their prayers, to testify that they assented and agreed to what was put up to God in their name, and on their behalf. Again, 2. It importeth earnest desire. Hence Jeremiah (chap. xxviii. 6.) said *Amen* to the prophecy of Hananiah, concerning the return of the captives to their land; to show how

earnestly he desired that it might be so. & It imports steadfast faith that the thing we pray for shall be granted; and accordingly, in testimony of our desire and assurance to be heard, we say, *Amen*, So be it; So let it be; So let it be, O Lord, for ever.

CHAP. IV.

Our apostle having in the three foregoing chapters managed the doctrinal part of this epistle, and treated of the great and deep mysteries of the Christian religion, comes now (as his manner was in all his epistles) to the practical part of it, wherein he exhorts his beloved Ephesians to many excellent Christian duties, which Almighty God expected from them, for all the distinguishing favours and privileges received from him. These duties are laid down, first more generally, and then more particularly; the more general duties he begins with here in this chapter, ver. 1, 2.

I THEREFORE, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.

As if he had said, "Seeing the riches of God's grace in Christ have so abounded towards you, who were once Ephesian idolaters, but now converted Gentiles, I Paul, who am a prisoner for preaching the gospel, and for declaring this grace to you, do most affectionately exhort you, that ye live answerably to your profession, and according to the great obligation of your high and holy vocation from heathenism to Christianity." Here note, 1. The person exhorting and beseeching, *I Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you*; I that am in bonds for Christ, I that am imprisoned for preaching the gospel to you, and for proselyting you by it to Christianity. Nothing can more oblige a people to hearken to the exhortations of the ministers of Christ, than this consideration, that the truths which they deliver to them, they stand ready both to suffer for and to seal with their precious blood: *I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you.* Note, 2. The comprehensive duty exhorted to, *That ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called*; worthy, that is, beseeching and becoming your holy profession, answerable to the dignity and obligation of your Christian name; or, as he exhorteth the Philippians, chap. i. 20, "walk as becometh the gospel of Jesus Christ." But when may we be said so to do? *Ans.* When we walk according to the precepts and commands of the gospel; answerable to the privileges and prerogatives of the gospel; answerable to that grand pattern of holiness which the gospel sets before us, the example of Jesus Christ; answerable to the helps and supplies of grace which the gospel affords.

Finally, to walk worthy of our vocation, is to walk answerable to those high and glorious hopes which the gospel raises the Christian up to the expectation of.

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love: 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Having exhorted them to the practice of their general duty, namely, to *walk worthy of their holy vocation*, in the former verse; in these two verses he presses upon them more special and particular duties, the chief of which is the duty of Christian unity and concord; *endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit*. The word signifies a diligent, industrious, and united endeavour, to preserve and keep, to support and maintain, the unity of the Spirit; that is, an union of heart and spirit, an unity of faith and doctrine, an unity of judgment and affection, amongst all the professors of Christianity. Observe, 2. The means by which this duty may be performed, and the unity of the Spirit maintained; namely, *in or by the bond of peace*: a peaceable disposition and temper, a peaceable deportment and behaviour, is the bond or ligament which binds Christians together; whereas discord and division cuts that bond asunder. Observe, 3. The special graces which the apostle recommends unto us, as excellent helps for preserving unity and peace; namely, humility, meekness, mutual forbearance. 1. Humility; ver. 2. *With all lowliness*; that is, with all submissiveness of mind, and humble apprehensions of ourselves. What Tertullus said of Festus flatteringly, we may say of humility truly, *By thee, O humility, we enjoy great quietness*. The humble man is a peaceable man; only by pride cometh contention. 2. Meekness; which consists in a backwardness to provoke others, or to be provoked by others; as lowliness stood in opposition to pride, so meekness here stands in opposition to peevishness: *With all lowliness and meekness*. 3. Long-suffering and mutual forbearance; when Christians are so far from resenting every wrong, and revenging every injury that is offered to them, that they can bear with one another's weaknesses, cover each other's infirmities, pity one another's failings, and pardon each other's provocations. And this duty of mutual forbearance ought to proceed from a principle of love to each other; *forbearing one another in love*.

4 *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope*

of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

The apostle having exhorted the Ephesians to a strict unity and concord amongst themselves next proceeds to enforce his exhortation with several arguments; and there are no fewer than seven summed up in the three verses now before us. 1. Says the apostle, there is *one body*, that is, one universal church, whereof ye are all members. 2. There is *one Spirit*, by which ye are all animated and enlivened, and therefore keep the unity of the Spirit. 3. There is *one hope* of eternal life, by which we are all excited. Our inheritance in heaven is the same; God doth not give one a double portion, or a parti-coloured coat above another; but it is called an *inheritance in light*, because all alike are partakers of it, and sharers in it: the saints have all one hope, therefore should have all but one heart. 4. *One Lord* Jesus Christ, the head of his church, the Saviour of the body, one whom we all profess to serve and obey: Be ye therefore one, for your Lord is one. 5. There is *one faith*: that is, either one grace of faith whereby we believe, or one doctrine of faith which is believed; ye all believe in one and the same Saviour, and are justified by him after one and the same manner; therefore be ye also one; one in affection as well as one in belief. 6. There is *one baptism*, one door by which we all enter into the church; both Jew and Gentile, bond and free, rich and poor, they are all one in Christ Jesus, and by one Spirit baptized into one body. 7. *One God and Father of all things*. And of all persons in Christ, whom we all expect one and the same salvation from. And this God is transcendently above all, and over all: his eye penetrates and pierces through you all, and he is in and among you all, as in his holy temple; therefore such as endeavour to divide you, do as much as in them lies to divide God himself that dwells in you. This then is the sum of the apostle's argument: Seeing ye are all members of *one body*, partakers of *one Spirit*: expectants of *one hope*, having *one Lord* and common Saviour, *one faith* and belief, one and the same baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and one and the same God and Father in Christ; seeing you are one in all these particulars, be one among yourselves, and endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." From the whole learn, That so many are the obligations, so strong the bonds and ties, which lie upon all the members of the

church to be at unity among themselves, of one judgment, and of one heart; that such as violate these bonds, and culpably divide and separate themselves from communion with their brethren, Christ looks upon them no longer as members of his body, but as having rent and torn themselves from it.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now, that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Our apostle here in these verses supplies us with another weighty argument to persuade us to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; namely, that it is one great and chief end which Christ aimed at, in instituting the ministry of the word, in appointing the several officers in his church, of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and also in the several gifts which he bestowed upon those officers; he assures us, it was Christ's great design, in and by all these, to bring his people, not only to faith and knowledge, but to unity in the faith, and in the knowledge of the Son of God. And here, 1. Our apostle shows that the diversity of gifts and graces, and the different measure and degrees of those gifts and graces, bestowed by Christ upon the several members of the church, do all tend to preserve and to promote unity, they all coming from one and the same author, and being all given for one and the same end. *Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* Learn hence, 1. That there is a grace given by Christ to all his members, bearing some proportion and similitude to that grace which was conferred

upon Christ himself. Learn, 2. That the design of Christ, in dispensing his grace in different measures and degrees, is the general good of his church, and particularly for preserving and promoting unity and love amongst his members; for seeing every one has his several graces from God, and no one has all, if one hath that grace which another wants, and if one wants that grace which another has, it shows that we want the help of one another, and therefore ought to love one another: this is the apostle's argument. Next he proceeds to prove that Christ has dispensed this diversity of gifts amongst his members; affirming, that in the day of his ascension into the highest heavens, *he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.* In which expression there is a manifest allusion to the Roman conquerors, who in the day of their triumphs scattered their munificence and bounty, their largesses and donatives, among their soldiers and their subjects. Thus Christ, after he had triumphed over his own and his church's enemies upon the cross, rode in the triumphant chariot of his ascension into heaven, where he received gifts as the purchase of his blood, and shed forth those gifts of his Spirit in various kinds, upon his members in general, but upon his ministers in particular: which gifts, in the first ages of Christianity, were extraordinary, as the gifts of tongues and miracles; but now ordinary, and to continue to the end of the world. Now from the apostle's scope and design in this argument, we learn, That though diversity of gifts in the church, and divers measures of grace in and among the members thereof, are too often a sad occasion of division and strife, through the prevalency of envy and pride, and other dividing lusts; yet this great variety and diversity of gifts and graces, rightly considered, would be found to be one of the strongest ties and bonds of union, seeing we all stand in mutual need of the gifts and graces of each other. It is very evident, that our apostle's scope here is, to urge and enforce unity, from the diversity of gifts and graces which are amongst the members of the church; God forbid then that they should occasion envy and animosities, strife and contention, rents and divisions. Our apostle's next argument for unity, is in the 11th and 12th verses, where he proves, that as the unity and edification of the church was the design of Christ in dispensing divers gifts and graces amongst the members of the church, so was it likewise his aim and end in instituting such variety of offices and officers in his church: for this end it was that he gave to his church by qualification

and mission, first, *Apostles*, sent forth first by his own mouth, to be witnesses of his doctrine and miracles, and then to preach the gospel throughout all the world, having received the Holy Spirit in an extraordinary manner, at the feast of Pentecost, to fit them for that service, *Acts* ii. 1, 2. Next, *Prophets*, who explained the mysteries of faith, foretold things to come, and expounded the writings of the old prophets. Then, *Evangelists*, who were sent out by the apostles, some to plant, others to water the churches which they had planted, without being fixed to any particular place. Lastly, *Pastors* and *Teachers*, called also: Bishops and Elders, who were set over the churches as guides and instructors. Learn hence, 1. That it is Christ's special prerogative, as head of the church, to institute and appoint such offices and officers in his church, as to his own wisdom seems meet, for the edification and government of it. Learn, 2. That the great end and design of Christ in instituting such variety of offices and officers in his church, was his church's unity, that by all ministerial helps and endeavours his members might be compacted and knit together, and made one entire body, by the increase of sanctity, concord, and unity. *He gave some apostles, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints*, (not for converting sinners only,) *and for the edifying of the body of Christ*. Observe lastly, The apostle declares how long the work of the ministry, appointed by Christ for his church's edification and advantage, was to continue: namely, to the end of the world, to the day of judgment; *till all come*, by means of the same faith in Christ, and knowledge of him, *unto a perfect man, and unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*: that is, till the church, which is Christ's mystical body, shall be complete and perfect, and attain its full stature from infancy to full manhood. Learn hence, 1. That the church of Christ here on earth, is labouring for, and endeavouring after, perfection in grace and knowledge, to come unto a perfect man, and to attain to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Learn, 2. That the ministry of the word is an ordinance of Christ's own appointment, to continue to the end of the world, in order to that purpose and design. Learn, 3. That none of the most eminent saints on earth (the most knowing and pious ministers of the gospel not excepted) are above ordinances, above the ministry of the word, above receiving benefit and advantage by the plain and practical preaching of it; even St. Paul here puts himself in, and reckons himself among

the number of those who stood in need of the ministry of God's word, to bring him to a perfect man, and to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; he says not *till ye*, but *till we all come unto a perfect man*. Such people then as think themselves above ordinances, are above God himself; none need ordinances so much as those that want them least. And such hearers as turn their backs upon the preaching of the word, because they know more than the minister can teach them, and can better instruct the preacher than he instructed by him, they betray their own ignorance both of the inward end and of the nature of the word, and a w of the state of their own hearts: for if their understandings want no light, do their affections need no warmth? Have you no grace to be perfected, no consciences to be weakened, no good resolutions to be strengthened? If your knowledge be imperfect, as sure it is, do not your affections want a fresh excitement? Admit the despised preacher cannot be your instructor, yet sure he may be your remembrancer, and excite you to that duty which you know already perhaps better than you practise it.

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

St. Paul, in these words, declares one special end for which the ministry of the word was instituted and appointed, namely, to preserve from error and seduction, to prevent instability of mind, and unsettledness of judgment, and to confirm persons in fundamental truths, *that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, &c.* Observe here, 1. The name which St. Paul gives to unstable persons and unsettled professors: he calls them *children*, not in regard of age, but in respect of knowledge and understanding: *children*, is a word that denotes imperfection and weakness, instability and ungroundedness in knowledge. Observe, 2. How the unsteadiness of these professors is expressed by a double metaphor; the former is drawn from a wave of the sea, they are *tossed to and fro*; the latter is drawn from a light cloud hovering in the air, carried about from place to place: neither wave nor cloud have any constancy, but are both moving if the least wind be stirring. Observe, 3. The cause of this instability; *every wind of doctrine*; professors that have no solid principles, every wind of doctrine has power over

them to drive them to and fro, every teacher can cast them into what mould he pleases, and blow them, like glasses, into this or that shape, at the pleasure of his breath. But why *wind of doctrine*? Because there is no solidity in it, but being *wind* in the preacher, it breeds but *wind* in the hearer, because of its variety and novelty, and because of its prevalence over unstaid men. How suddenly sometimes is a family, a town, yea, a whole country, leavened with a particular error! Observe, 4. The characters of those impostors and seducers that do thus unsettle and unhinge men, they use *sleight*; a metaphor taken from gamesters, who with art and sleight of hand can cog the dice, and win the game. Seducers cheat with false doctrines, as gamesters do with false dice. *Cunning craftiness*; the word signifies the subtlety and deep policy of the old serpent; implying that seducers are old and *cunning* gamesters, skilful to deceive: *they lie in wait to deceive*; the word signifies an *ambushment*, or stratagem of war, implying that all seducers' *sleight and craftiness* is to this very end and purpose, that they may entrap and catch men within the ambush of their impostures. From the whole learn, That seducers and false teachers are craftsmasters of sleight and subtlety, and stratagems of deceit; they have artifices, ways and methods, to take men unawares, and to make merchandise of the people: they wrest and rack the scriptures to make them speak what they please, not what the Holy Ghost intended. If all this art fails, their last advice is, to recommend their doctrines upon some private pretended revelation and uncommon impulse of the Holy Spirit: by all which methods they lie in wait to deceive.

15 But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Our apostle had set forth the excellent end of the ministry, in the foregoing verse, for furthering their stability and steadfastness in grace; here he declares the admirable fitness of it, for helping forward their proficiency and growth in grace. *Speaking the truth in love*: that is, cleaving to the truth of Christ's doctrine, and living in love with one another, you may grow up

in Christ by making progress in all christian graces, being united to him as members to the head. Here note, How the apostle draws a comparison between the natural and mystical members, and the increase of both: as there must be a fellowship betwixt the natural head and members, so must there be a union betwixt Christ, the spiritual head, and believers, his mystical members; and as there is further required a mutual communion and fellowship of the members of the body within, and amongst themselves, in order to growth and increase, so must there be concord, love, and unity, amongst believers, if they expect to see grace growing in themselves, or in one another. Are the members of the natural body severally distinct from one another, some principal, others ministerial; but all concurring to the service of the whole? So, in order to spiritual growth, must all the members of Christ's mystical body keep their rank and order, and act in their own sphere, with spiritual wisdom and humility; the eye not doing the work of the hand, nor the hand the work of the foot; but every one in the calling wherein he is called, must there abide with God. Again, is there supply of nourishment from one member to another, according to the measure of every part in the natural body? So is there a supply from head to members in the mystical body, and from one mystical member to another: one is apt to teach, another ready to comfort, a third able to convince, a fourth willing to exhort, a fifth to advise and counsel; and all these, and every one of these, contributing all they can to the welfare and growth of the whole. Happy is it both for the natural and mystical body, when the members of both are subservient to each other, and contribute all they can to the mutual growth and improvement of one another, and especially for the benefit and advantage of the whole.

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart, 19 Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Our apostle having finished this grand exhortation to love and unity amongst all christians, and enforced it with the

most weighty arguments and motives in the former part of the chapter; comes now, in the latter part of it to press the Ephesians to the practice of particular duties. The first of which is this, to take special care, that, being now converted christians, they walk no more like ignorant and unconverted heathens: *Walk not as other Gentiles walk.* Next he gives particular instances how, and after what manner, the Gentiles, in the black night of paganism, did walk: namely, 1. *In the vanity of their minds,* following their own imaginations, and not any revelation from God, in the matters of his worship. 2. *Having their understandings darkened;* their minds void of saving knowledge. 3. *They were alienated from the life of God:* that is, from a godly life: they were strangers to the life which God commanded, which God approved, and which God himself lived. Here note, That holiness is called the *life of God*, because it is the life which God requires of us, it is the life which he works in us, it is the life whereby God liveth in us; the life whereby we live unto God; it is an everliving life; not obnoxious to death, as the Ephesians were: so every carnal man, before conversion, is alienated from this life of God; he has no liking of it, no inclination to it, but prefers a life of sin before it. Lord, how many that are surrounded with the celestial beams of the gospel, are as impure and impenitent now as these Gentiles were then in the black night of paganism! 4. They were *past feeling:* their sottish stupidity had benumbed them, the flames of their lusts had seared their consciences to a desperate degree of hardness and insensibility: they were at once insensible of their sin, and of their danger by reason of sin. A dead conscience, and a desperate dissolute life, are inseparable companions. 5. *They gave themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.* Here see how insensibility of sin begets insatiableness in sinning; they work uncleanness with insatiable greediness, who have once abandoned themselves to sin, especially to the sin of uncleanness. Lord! this was the deplorable case of the heathen world, before the light of the gospel did arise and shine upon them. But, alas! it is the case of multitudes that sit under the brightest beams of gospel light: they shut their eyes, and will not see; they extinguish all sense of immortality and a future state, and so abandon themselves to a life of brutish sensuality, *working all uncleanness with greediness:* but let them know assuredly, that though they live like beasts, yet they shall not die like them, nor shall their latter end

be like theirs, the soul being under a divine ordination to an everlasting existence in a future state, in which it shall be eternally happy or intolerably miserable, according as we manage our deportment in this present world.

20 But ye have not so learned Christ; 21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts: 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind: 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

In these verses, 1. Our apostle acquaints the converted Ephesians, that the saving knowledge of Christ, which they had received, instructed them better than to practise such licentiousness and wickedness as the unconverted Gentiles wallowed in. *But ye have not so learned Christ;* that is, the gospel of Christ. Nothing curbs sin, nothing cures sin, in a licentious sinner, like the doctrine of Christ revealed in the gospel; no moral precepts from the school of the heathens, which some so much magnify and applaud, can compare with this, which lays open the root of this accursed disease, and leads us to the remedy which the wisdom of God has appointed for its cure, even the blood of his own Son. Then blessed be God for revealed religion! Observe, 2. The apostle acquaints them *what the truth as it is in Jesus*, that is, the doctrine of the gospel, doth direct them to, enjoin and require of them; namely, to *put off the old man*, that is, their former heathen conversation, and manner of life, say some; but this they had put off already at their first conversion to christianity. *By the old man*, then, understand, the old corrupt nature, so called, because it is as old as Adam, and derived from Adam, and which daily more and more corrupts and depraves us by its deceitful lusts, if it be not resisted and subdued. But this is not sufficient, that we *put off the old man*, unless we put on the *new*, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds after God; that is, after the image of God, which consisteth in righteousness and true holiness. Note here, 1. That regenerating grace is called the new man; because the person has a new principle infused into him, (says the pious bishop Fell, upon the place,) which enables him to lead a new

life. Regenerate men, then, are new men; they have a renewed and enlightened understanding, they have a sanctified and renewed will, renewed affections and desires; old things are passing away, and all things becoming new. Note, 2. That God himself is the pattern and exemplar, after which, and according to which, the new man is formed in the soul, *which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* What is Godliness, but Godlikeness? What is holiness, but the conformity of our natures to the holy nature of God, and the conformity of our lives to the will of God? *Acts xiii. 20.* I have found David, a man after my own heart, who shall perform all my will. Note, 3. That holiness is not only the reforming of the outward man, but it is the renewing of the mind; and not only of the mind, but of the spirit of the mind: by which understand the highest and most refined faculties of the mind, that part which is most free from the dregs of sin, and which comes up nearest to God, as the spirit of the mind and understanding doth. Verily, not our minds only, but even the spirit of our minds, need renewing, because corruption is got into the highest powers and superior faculties of the soul, and because we must serve God with all our mind; and if so, with the spirit of our mind; and blessed be God that regenerating and renewing grace is a universal principle, as sin was. Did sin invade the whole soul, all the powers and faculties of it, and deprive us of the divine image? It is the work of grace to restore our depraved natures to their primitive integrity; the renewed person is sanctified *totus*, though not *totaliter*; a new nature is found with him, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

Our apostle closes this chapter with an exhortation to several duties belonging to the second table; namely, to abstain from lying, from anger, from stealing, from corrupt communication, from all bitterness of spirit, from malice and revenge, and to exercise brotherly kindness and mutual forgiveness. From whence note, That Christians must make conscience of the duties of the second table, as well as of the first, and perform their duty towards their neighbour, as well as towards God; for the law is one copulative. *God spake all these words*; the authority of the law-

giver is despised in the violation of the least command; when therefore second-table duties are performed by us, from arguments and motives drawn from the first table, that is, when, in obedience to God's command, and with an eye to his glory, we perform our duty to our neighbour, this is both an argument of our sincerity, and also an ornament to our profession. *Wherefore put away lying, &c.* Lying was a vice very common among the heathens: it is likely, the Ephesians, in their heathen state, had been very guilty of it, for they thought it lawful, when it was beneficial, to lie: for they affirmed, that a lie was better than a hurtful truth. Our apostle therefore exhorts them, now converted to Christianity, to speak exact truth one to another; and adds a forcible reason for it, because they were members one of another; that is, of human society, which by lying is destroyed; falsehood dissolves the bond of human society. Learn hence, That there is no sin more unseemly in a Christian, more inconsistent with grace, more abominable to God, more like unto the devil, more injurious and prejudicial to human society, than the sin of lying; fidelity towards each other, and mutual confidence in each other, being that which makes human society both safe and easy.

26 Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath: **27** Neither give place to the devil.

Some understand these words only as a cautionary direction, and sense them thus: If ye be angry at any time, take heed that ye sin not, by exceeding due bounds; and if at any time it doth so, suppress it speedily, before the sun go down. This was a practice even amongst the heathen; before the sun went down, they would shake hands and embrace one another; to the shame of Christians, who gave place to the devil, according to the known proverb, *Contubernalem habet diabolus, qui lectum petit iratus.* "He that goes angry to bed, has the devil for his chamber-fellow;" yea, for his bed-fellow! nay, he lies not only in his bed, but in his bosom. Others understand the words as a precept and command: *Be angry*, but take heed of sinful anger. Now the way to be angry and not sin, is to be angry at nothing but at sin; it is our duty to be angry when we see others depart from their duty. Meek Moses, who was cool enough in his own cause, was not so in God's; he has no zeal for God, that is not moved when he sees or hears God dishonoured. Learn hence, 1. That anger

being an affection implanted by God in the human nature, is not in itself evil or sinful, but in some cases a necessary duty. Learn hence, 2. That there is an easy and ready passage from what is lawful to what is sinful, *Be angry, and sin not*; implying, that it is a very easy matter to sin in our anger, and no easy matter to be angry and not to sin. Learn, 3. That it is very difficult, if not impossible, to avoid sin in our anger, if we let anger hang upon our spirits, and continue with us: anger may pass through the heart of a wise man, but rests in the bosom of fools: anger against sin must continue, but continuance in anger will be sinful. To prevent the sin of immoderate anger, these rules will be useful: 1. Desire not to hear what others say of thee, lest you want patience to bear what you hear; many tear themselves with anger, when they hear themselves torn with slander; we had better be in the dark concerning our own wrongs, than by knowing of them wrong ourselves by passion or desire of revenge. 2. What you do hear said of you, interpret always in the most favourable sense; call it an infirmity, and distinguish between the action and intention, between what is spoken and the intent of the speaker. 3. In and under all provocations, cast your eye upward, look up to God; and cast your eye inward, and see what you have deserved; though not at your neighbour's hand, yet at God's hand. Shimei gave David provocation to boil up his anger to the height of fury, *2 Sam. xvi. 5.* but by eyeing God, how calm and meek was his spirit! Thus, *be angry, and sin not.*

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Observe here, 1. The sin dissuaded from: theft and stealing. This the heathen nations counted no crime; they made no conscience, either openly or fraudulently, to take away their neighbour's goods. Therefore, says the apostle, let those of you, who in the time of your paganism and unregeneracy, were given to stealing, now, being converted to Christianity, do so no more. Observe, 2. The remedy prescribed for the prevention of this sin; and that is diligence and labour in some honest calling: *Let him labour, working with his hands.* Idleness occasions poverty, brings men to want, increases their necessities, and then they betake themselves to indirect and unlawful means to supply them. Observe, 3. One special reason why per-

sons should labour in the way of their calling; that they might have to give to him that needeth; not only that they may have wherewith to relieve their own wants, but the wants of others. Where note, That God expects charity from the hands of those who get their living with their hands: day-labourers, and such as have nothing to live upon but their work, must yet give their mite, their alms, for the help of the indigent. Observe, 4. The restriction and qualification of this labour of the hands: he must work that which is good, that he may give to him that needeth. To relieve others with the gain of oppression, or with the hire of an harlot, is unacceptable; the matter of our alms must be goods righteously gotten, otherwise it is robbery, not righteousness.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Here the apostle directs us how to manage our tongues, both negatively and positively, telling us what we should not speak, and what we should: Let no corrupt, rotten, filthy discourse, come out of your mouth; such as have rotten lungs have a stinking breath; filthy discourse argues a polluted heart; such noisome discourse is unsavoury to an holy ear, and greatly offensive, contagious, and infecting to common and ordinary hearers. Next, he tells them what they should speak: That which is profitable and edifying, and that which may minister increase of grace to the hearers. Our speech should be so gracious and savoury, as to discover grace wrought in our hearts, and by a means of working in the hearts of others; elsewhere St. Paul advises that our speech be savoury, seasoned with salt, *Col. iv. 6.* Truth, holiness, and prudence, is the salt of our words; Christians must not suffer their tongues to run at random in their ordinary discourse; it is not sufficient that they do not speak to evil purposes, but they must speak to edifying purpose; that which has a tendency to make the hearers some way or other either wiser or better, this the apostle calls that which is good to the use of edifying.

30 And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Observe here, 1. The title given to the Spirit of God: he is styled the Holy Spirit, being essentially and infinitely holy in himself, and the author of all grace and

holiness in us. Observe, 1. The affection of grief, which is here attributed to the Spirit, not properly, but improperly: when we do that which would most certainly afflict and grieve him, were he a subject capable of grief; and when, upon provocations given on our parts, he carrieth himself towards us after the manner of a person grieved, namely, when we provoke him to suspend his influence, to withdraw his comforts, leaving us without any present sense of feeling of his assistances; he is also then grieved when he is opposed, interrupted, controlled, and disturbed, in his operations of grace and comfort upon our souls. Observe, 3. The argument used to enforce the exhortation, not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God: because by it we are sealed to the day of redemption. But what doth God's *sealing* his people by his Holy Spirit intimate and imply? *Ans.* 1. It intimates that God has distinguished them from others. 2. That he has appropriated them to himself. 3. That he has put a value upon them, and a very high esteem. And, 4. It imports the irrevocable purpose of God for their salvation. Seals are for these uses, ends, and purposes: seals are for distinction, for appropriation, for confirmation; and argue a high valuation and precious esteem of the person or thing which the seal is put upon. *Grieve not the Spirit, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption;* that is, to the day of judgment.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Our apostle had exhorted, in the former verse, not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God; in the next verse, he acquaints us with the particular sins that would afflict and grieve him: namely, *Bitterness*, that is, a secret grudge and a smothered displeasure against our brother: *Wrath*, or an impetuous fierceness of spirit, upon some real or apprehended injury: *Anger*, an eager desire of revenge: *Clamour*, loud threatenings, or reviling language: *Evil-speaking*, either of others, or to others: *Malice*, a rooted enmity, the rage of the devil; and renders a man as like the devil as any sin on this side hell. All these sins do exceedingly grieve the Holy Spirit; they make him both loathe and leave his lodgings. In the last verse, as a proper remedy against all the foregoing sins, he

exhorts them to mutual kindness: *Be ye kind one towards another;* that is, of a sweet and loving disposition, affable and courteous to each other; neither carrying it loftily or morosely, but affably and humbly; *tender-hearted*, having a compassionate sense of the miseries and infirmities of one another; *forgiving* one another whatever has been matter of provocation in each other, according to the example of God, who for Christ's sake has forgiven us. Learn hence, 1. That Christians are obliged by the laws of their holy religion, to forbear and forgive one another. Learn, 2. That they are obliged to forgive one another, as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven them. As God forgives us universally, freely, heartily, and sincerely, and when he has power in his hand to revenge; so should we in like manner forgive one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us.

CHAP. V.

BE ye therefore followers of God, as dear children:

Our apostle having, in the conclusion of the foregoing chapter, exhorted the Ephesians to mutual offices of love and kindness towards each other, in the beginning of this chapter he makes use of several very cogent arguments to excite and quicken them thereunto. The first of which is drawn from the example of God: as he had been kind to us, and for Christ's sake forgiven us, let us therefore be followers of him, not as our God only, but as our Father: *Be ye followers of God, as dear children.* Where note, 1. The duty exhorted to: *Be ye followers of God;* that is, in all the excellences of his communicable attributes, and particularly in the exercise of universal goodness and kindness, mercy and forgiveness. The argument exciting to this duty; *as dear children;* you are children, and who should children imitate but their father? And you are dear children, will you not imitate such a Father? Learn from both, That such as lay claim to a relation to God, without imitation to him, are not children, but bastards: they may be of his family, but not of his household; of his family by instruction, but not by descent. There is no implantation into Christ without an imitation, both of the Creator and Redeemer, Heb. iii. 6. *Christ as a Son over his own house: whose house are we, if we hold fast, &c.*

2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself

for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.

Here we have a second argument urged, to walk in love one with and one towards another, drawn from the example of Christ; he also, as well as God the Father, hath loved us; and the instance given of his love, is the highest that ever was or can be given: He gave *himself* for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. Observe here, 1. The great duty of the law: *Walk in love*. This implies the exercise of this grace, not barely to have it in the principle and habit, but to exercise and exert it in the act; and it implies the universal exercise of grace; whatever we do both to God and man, must be done in love, 1 Cor. xvi. 14. *Let all your deeds be done with charity*. Observe, 2. As the great duty of the law, to walk in love, so the great pattern of the gospel, as Christ also hath loved us. The particle *as* hath first the force of an argument, and is as much as *because* Christ hath loved us; and it has also the force of a rule to direct us in the manner how we should love one another, with an *as* of identity, but not equality: not with the same degree, but with the same kind, of love wherewith Christ hath loved us. But why *hath*, rather than *doth* love us? Why in the preter, rather than in the present, tense? *Ans.* To denote both the priority of Christ's love; that he loved us before we loved him; yea, before we loved ourselves; nay, before we had any being in the world, we had a being in his love, even from all eternity. And also to denote the indubitable certainty of his love: He hath loved you; you need not doubt it, nor question it; he hath given actual and undeniable proofs of it; follow him from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven again, and you will find every step he took to have been in love: *Walk then in love, as Christ also hath loved us*. Learn hence, 1. That our Lord Jesus Christ hath given an ample and full demonstration of his great and wonderful love unto his church and people. 2. That this love of Christ towards us, should not only be an argument and motive to excite and quicken us to walk in love one towards another, but also an exact rule and copy to direct and guide us in our walking. There are some incommunicable properties in Christ's love, which we cannot imitate. As his love was an eternal love, an infinite love, a free love, without motive, and in despite of obstacles, a redeeming love; such cannot our love be one to another; but as Christ's love was an operative love, a beneficent

love, a preventive love, a soul love, a constant love: thus we are to imitate it, and walk in love one towards another. Observe, 3. The high instance and expression which Christ has given of his love unto us: *He gave himself for us, a sacrifice unto God, &c.* He gave; now gifts are expressions of love; he gave himself, that is more than if he had given all the angels in heaven, and all the treasures on earth, for us, more than the whole world, yea, than ten thousand worlds: he gave himself an offering and a sacrifice, a voluntary sacrifice, a meritorious, efficacious, expiatory, and propitiatory sacrifice, and this for us, to be stuck, and bleed to death in our stead. And he gave himself a sacrifice to God, as an injured and offended God; to God, as a revenger of sin; to God, as the guardian and giver of the law; to God, as the asserter of his truth in the threatenings; he appeared before God as sitting upon a seat of justice, that he might open to us a throne of grace. Lastly, *For a sweet-smelling savour*, that is, he gave himself with an intention to be accepted, and God received him with a choice acceptation. Our sin had sent up a very ill savour to heaven, which disturbed the rest of God: Christ expels this ill scent, by the perfume of his precious blood. Learn hence, 1. That the sacrifice and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ were very free and voluntary: he offered himself, and his offering was a free-will offering. Learn, 2. That this voluntary sacrifice and free-will offering of Christ, was acceptable to God, and efficacious for men; it was acceptable to God, because a complete satisfaction for sin's wrong; and efficacious for us, because a discharge from the obligation of sin's guilt.

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints:

The apostle, in this and the following verses, exhorts the Ephesians to shun several sins, which were frequently practised among the Gentiles before their conversion to Christianity, as first, *fornication*, and all sorts and degrees of *uncleanness*. This was looked upon as an indifferent action, and no sin at all, by the Pagan world. Next, he advises them to beware of *covetousness*, that is, all irregular and inordinate desires, and lusting after things forbidden in the general, and particularly all insatiable love of riches, which in trading cities, (such as Ephesus) doth usually very much abound, which sins he earnestly desires may not

be named amongst them, that is, not named with approbation, not named without reprehension; nor named, that is, not committed by any of them, yea, not so much as named by them, without detestation. And the argument offered to dissuade from these sins, is drawn *ab indecore* as not becoming saints, that is, converted Christians, who profess separation from the world, and solemn dedication to God and Christ, and therefore ought to be holy in heart, chaste in mind, heavenly in desire, undefiled in body. A life of purity and chastity well becoming saints; they must be pure in heart, pure in tongue, pure in intention, pure in expression, pure in conversation, otherwise they answer not their name, nor walk according to their renewed nature: *Let no uncleanness be once named amongst you, as becometh saints.*

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks.

Here our apostle advises Christians to guard against the sins of the tongue, to avoid all filthy discourse, and all foolish discourse, all scurrilous and obscene jesting, all excess in drollery, which is nothing but the foam of a frothy wit. Moderate mirth, by innocent and inoffensive jesting, is not here forbidden: but when we jest by tart reflections upon the way, gesture, or natural imperfections of others, especially when we furnish out a jest in scripture attire, and in a jocular humour make light and irreverent application of scripture phrases! Lord! what an impious liberty do some men take, to bring forth scripture, as the Philistines brought forth Samson, only to make them sport. These men ere long will find Almighty God in earnest, though they were in jest when they played the buffoon with the most serious things in the world. Observe farther, Our apostle's argument to dissuade from such talk is this, *they are not convenient*: not convenient in themselves, not convenient for the speaker, not convenient for the hearers, for they poison instead of profiting the company, and pollute both the minds and manners of the hearers. O! what a great and common instrument of sin is the mouth or tongue of man! The tongue of a good man is his glory, the tongue of a sinner is his shame; there is no member of the body that doth so much service for the devil as the tongue, especially in common conversation; then it is that men let their tongues run riot, then they utter oaths and blasphemies against God, censorious, opprobrious, slanderous

words against their neighbours; to prevent all which, the apostle exhorts, in the last words of the verse, that when we meet together, we should rather recount the favours received from God, and bless him for them: *But rather giving of thanks.* As there is at all times, and in all places, cause of thanksgiving administered to us by God, so it is our duty to take all occasions and fit opportunities to excite both ourselves and others to the practice of it, who are naturally very averse and backward to it. From the whole note, That so quick and easy is the passage from what is lawful and allowed, to what is sinful and forbidden, that it is a task of no small difficulty to keep within the bounds of lawful and allowed mirth, especially by recreating our spirits by pleasant and delightful discourse, so that we exceed not either in matter, manner, or measure. Well might St. James say, chap. iii. 2. *If any man offend not in word, he is a perfect man*; intimating, that there are many, very many, that do thus offend; and such as do not, are Christians of no common attainment, but great proficient in grace; persons of extraordinary measures both of piety and prudence.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. 7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them:

Our apostle, considering how exceeding common the fore-mentioned sins were among the Gentiles, and how ready persons were to esteem lightly of them, advises the Ephesians here not to entertain in their minds light thoughts of them, or to believe any libertines which should represent them as small and inconsiderable matters; for how can a little sin be committed against a great God? or that sin be accounted light, which brings down the heavy wrath of God upon the person, and shuts him out of the kingdom of God! Note here, 1. The description of heaven; it is a *kingdom*, for its eminency and glory, for its fulness and sufficiency, for its safety and security, for its duration and perpetuity, so called; and it is the kingdom of Christ, and of God, that is, either the kingdom of Christ who is God, or the kingdom of Christ by purchase, and the kingdom of God by free donation. But mark, *The*

kingdom of Christ and of God; of Christ first, because there is no coming into the kingdom of God but by Christ. Christ is first named, because we enter by him into the kingdom, and in his right. Note, 2. The sins enumerated, which will assuredly shut persons out of his kingdom; and they are not external and corporeal sins only, as whoredom and uncleanness, but internal and spiritual; *covetousness, which is idolatry*. As a man may be guilty of adultery, and yet never touch a woman, and of murder, yet never strike his neighbour; so he may be guilty of idolatry, and yet never bow his knee to an idol: secret idolatry, soul idolatry, will shut out of heaven, as well as open idolatry. Any thing that has our highest esteem and regard, our extreme love and delight, and is the special object of our hope, our affiance and trust, of our fear and care, this we make our god. And thus the covetous man is an idolater, for he gives these acts of soul-worship to the creature, to something in the world which is not God. Every natural man is an idolater; either the world, or some worldly lust, is his god, and no idolater can have, while such, any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Note, 3. The seasonable advice which St. Paul gives the Ephesians, and *we* in them, not to be partakers of other men's sins: *Be not ye therefore partakers with them*, lest ye be also partakers with them in their plagues and punishments. *Quest.* But when may we be said to be partakers of other men's sins? *Ans.* When we consent to them, connive at them, rejoice in them, give counsel or command for them, by not hindering of them, by not publishing and punishing of them, if in our power, by not mourning over them, but especially by joining with them in the sinful practice of them; all these ways are we partakers of other men's sins.

8 For ye were sometimes darkness; but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

Here the Ephesians are put in mind of the darkness and blindness of their heathen state, before the light of the gospel came among them; they were not only dark, very much in the dark, but darkness itself: he next acquaints them with their happy condition, by entertaining of the gospel of Christ; they therefore became *light in the Lord*, they were savingly enlightened by the word and Spirit of God; and accordingly he urges them to walk answerably to their Christian profession, *Walk as children of the light*. Note here, 1. That the state which every soul is in by nature,

and before conversion, is a state of spiritual darkness; like men in the dark, they go they know not whither, they do they know not what, they stumble and fall they know not how and when. Note, 2. That all those whom God calls effectually out of the darkness and ignorance of their natural and unregenerate state, he doth enlighten them by his word and Holy Spirit. Note, 3. That such as are so called and enlightened, ought to walk suitably to their privilege, and answerably to their high and honourable profession. *Walk as children of light*; that is, holy, humbly, cheerfully, thankfully, before God; exemplarily and unblamably before the world.

9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) 10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

These words contain a reason why the Ephesians, who were once darkness, but then enlightened by the Holy Spirit, should walk as children of the light; namely, because the fruits of that light, or of the Holy Spirit, the author of that light which they had received, *is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth*, that is, it consisted in these things, these are the fruits of the enlightening and enlivening Spirit of God. So that the force of the argument lies thus: such a walking as is here directed to, namely, in the love and practice of universal righteousness and goodness, is the genuine fruit and natural result of the Holy Spirit, and accordingly as such they were obliged to it. None can walk as children of the light, but such as are renewed and quickened by the Holy Spirit of God, and made children of light; and such will be found in the practice of those duties, wherein that walk consisteth. *Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord*; that is, 1. To study the word, and find what is pleasing unto God. 2. To embrace with our hearts what we find to be so. And, 3. To practise in our lives what we embrace with our hearts. The scripture acquaints us with some persons and some performances which are very acceptable unto God; such persons as live most by faith, as are very upright in their walking, very sincere in all they do, such are greatly acceptable unto God; so the performances are also acceptable, namely, when we do justice and judgment, this is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice; both commutative and distributive justice betwixt man and man, more pleasing to God than the highest acts of worship performed to him without this, *Prov. xxi. 3.* To serve Christ with a pure intention, with good-

will, or a willing mind, and to suffer patiently for well-doing, this is highly pleasing and acceptable unto God, 1 Pet. ii. 20.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

Observe here, 1. The odious character wherewith sin in general is branded: it is styled darkness, a work of darkness, works of darkness, and an unfruitful work. Sin is styled darkness, because it originally springs from darkness, it naturally delights in darkness, it ultimately leads to eternal darkness. Sin is called a work of darkness, to imply the drudgery and toil, the labour and pains, that the sinner is at in the service of sin: the work of sin is a mere drudgery; it is not a pleasurable service, but a laborious servitude. And the apostle calling sin by the name of works, doth intimate to us, that one sin never goes single and alone, but has a dangerous train and retinue. Finally, Sin is an unfruitful work; not materially and subjectively unfruitful, for the corrupt nature of man is a rank soil in which sin thrives apace; but terminatively and ultimately, it is unfruitful in the conclusion, in the event and issue, Rom. vi. 21. *What fruit, &c.* Observe, 2. A dehortation, or negative precept: *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*: it is both the duty and interest of every christian to have nothing to do with any sinful work; the preceptive will of God requires this, sin being contrary to the holiness of his nature and will; and the dignity and purity of the gospel calls for this, which is a law of holiness, and a rule of holy living. Observe, 3. A positive injunction: *but rather reprove them*. How are we to reprove the unfruitful workers and works of darkness? Two ways: 1. By our lips; with plainness, but yet with prudence; with faithfulness, but yet with meekness; in reproof never use sharp words, if soft words will serve the turn. 2. With our lives; thus Nehemiah, by his princely demeanour, did reprove the covetousness of former governors, Neh. v. 15. *So did not I, because of the fear of the Lord*; a holy life is a visible and daily reproof given both to sin and sinners.

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. 13 But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

Here our apostle assigns particular reasons why the Ephesians should have no fel-

lowship with the unfruitful workers and works of darkness, but reprove them; namely, 1. The abominable filthiness of those sins which the wicked pagans committed, especially in their heathen mysteries, prescribed by the devil as part of his worship; such things done in secret as it was even a shame to speak of. 2. Because admonitions and reproof make the works of darkness manifest to the sinner's conscience, set sin forth in its black and ugly colours. A discovery of sin in its vile, odiousness, and ugliness, is necessary to a sinner's conviction of it, and conversion from it; and God doth not only bless the ministry of the word from the pulpit, but sometimes by a word of reproof from the mouth of a private christian, and the light of his holy example for this great end. A reproof piously and prudently given to open sinners, by private christians, shall not miss of its end; it will certainly have its effect, either in the sinner's conversion and salvation, or in his obduration and condemnation: as all things reprov'd are made manifest by light, so a prudent reproof and pious conversation put sin to shame, if not to silence.

14 Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

The last argument which our apostle offers to consideration, for enforcing the duty of reprov'ing the unfruitful workers and works of darkness, is drawn from the example of God himself, whose great design it is, by his holy word, to awaken men out of the deep sleep of sin and death, that Christ may give them light. Here note, The dangerous and deplorable, though not hopeless and desperate state, of an unconverted and impenitent sinner, namely, *spiritual sleep and death*. Every man by nature is in a dead sleep till the renovating change; he apprehends things as a man asleep; all his thoughts of God and Christ, of heaven and hell, of sin and holiness, are slight and hovering notions, not real and thorough apprehensions; the most substantial realities are with them but phantasms and imaginations. Imaginary dangers startle them, like men in a dream; but real dangers, though never so near, do not affect them. As in natural sleep, all the senses of the body, so in spiritual sleep, are all the senses of the soul bound up; and accordingly, this sleep is not casual, but connatural to our present sinful state; a soul drenched in sensuality sleeps, as it were, by choice and not by chance. But

how, O sinner, canst thou sleep under such a load of sin and guilt, with so many wounds in thy conscience, with so many ulcers in thy soul? Can a diseased man sleep? Can a condemned man sleep? Can a man in debt sleep? All this the sinner is: and yet though God thunders above, and hell gapes from beneath, and the sinner hangs over it by the fretted thread of this life, yet he is in a profound sleep; but his damnation slumbers not, if he doth not speedily awake, and arise from the dead, that Christ may give him light.

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.

These words may be considered two ways; either, 1. As a direction to those, who according to the foregoing exhortation, do reprove sinners for their unfruitful works of darkness, namely to walk very circumspectly themselves. "See then how circumspectly you walk," so the words may be rendered; and it intimates to us, that those only are fit to reprove sin in others who walk very circumspectly and unblamably themselves; such only have authority to reprove, and such only can hope for success in reproving, ver. 11. *Rather reprove them: see then that ye walk circumspectly.* Secondly, The words may be considered as a new precept, added by St. Paul to the former given in this chapter, for directing the Ephesians to an holy life; he assures them, that if they will walk holily, they must walk circumspectly, and that circumspect walking is wise walking. Observe here, 1. the necessity of circumspect walking: *See that ye walk circumspectly.* Learn hence, That it is impossible for a christian to maintain a holy course of obedience to the commands of God, without great care and caution, heedfulness and circumspection; none can walk holily, that do not walk circumspectly and watchfully. Such is that weakness and inconstancy of our nature, so many and so subtle are our spiritual enemies, and so intimate with us, so strict and exact is the law of God we are to walk by, and so holy and jealous is that God we are to walk before, that it is impossible to walk before him acceptably, if we do not walk circumspectly. Observe, 2. As the necessity, so the excellency of circumspect walking: it is not foolish, unadvised, and unaccountable walking; but it is truly wise walking; such walking as the wisdom of God recommends to us, and such walking as bespeaks us truly and really wise. Such as walk loosely, walk foolishly: careless walking is foolish walking; but circumspect walking is wise walking; for it is to be wise

for ourselves, and wise to our best and true interest; it is to be wise for time, and wise to eternity; wise both for this, and for the coming world. *See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.*

16 Redeeming the time because the days are evil.

Observe here, 1. A most important and necessary duty exhorted to; namely, to redeem the time. This cannot be done in a natural sense: time, once past, is irrecoverably lost, we can no more recall it; but in a moral sense, time may be said to be redeemed, when our diligence to improve it is redoubled, when we do much work in a little time. To redeem time, supposes and implies a right knowledge of the use and end of time, and high valuation of the worth and excellency of time, and resolution to rescue it out of the hands of those that would devour it: idleness, excess of sleep, inordinate adorning of the body, immoderate recreations, vain company, an excess of worldly business, all these are robbers of our time, and time must be rescued out of their hands. *Quest.* Who are the persons more especially concerned to redeem time? *Ans.* All those that are young: such as have idly wasted a great part of their time; all that are ignorant and graceless; all that are weak and aged, and have but a few sands in their glass; all those that are recovered from sickness; and all such as, through poverty, restraint or service, are scant of their time, should wisely redeem it, and industriously improve it, for God and their souls: because upon this moment depends eternity, and according to our present choice will be our eternal lot. Observe, 2. The apostle's argument here, to excite all persons wisely to redeem their time; namely, *because the days are evil*; that is, full of sin, by the scandalous lives of professors; full of error, by the subtlety of heretical seducers; full of affliction and misery, by reason of sharp and hot persecutions. When days are most evil, most sinful and calamitous, then it is a Christian's duty to improve his time well and wisely, for God and his soul! *Redeem the time, because the days are evil.*

17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

As if he had said, "Seeing the times are so perilous, and your opportunities of doing good so uncertain, be wise, and understand what are the proper duties of your place and station, and know how to manage yourselves in every relation, with reference to the duties, dangers, snares, and tempta-

tions, which may be before you, and this according to the will of God revealed in his word. Learn hence, That it is a special part of divine wisdom to understand and know what is the mind and will of God concerning us, in every condition of life which his providence brings us into; to the intent that we may fill up every relation with the proper duties of it, to the glory of God and our own and other's satisfaction: *Be ye not unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Observe here, 1. Our apostle's seasonable debortation: *Be not drunk with wine.* Drunkenness, as well as uncleanness, and drunkenness with uncleanness, for they commonly go together, were sins which the Ephesians and unconverted pagans were generally guilty of. St Paul therefore cautions these new converts against this old sin, which transports men to insolent and outrageous practices, as the words next intimate, *For therein is excess.* The original word may be rendered *lewdness* and *lust*, to denote, that when persons are inflamed with wine, they are liable to all manner of excessive wickedness, and particularly to the sin of uncleanness. Observe, 2. The duty exhorted to, in order to the prevention of this sin; and that is, to labour and endeavour, instead of being filled with wine, to be full of the Holy Spirit of God, to be filled with the sanctifying graces of the Holy Spirit. Blessed be God, he allows us to seek after the greatest and fullest measures of the Holy Spirit; and injurious we are to ourselves, if we content ourselves with small measures and degrees of it. The sense of the word seems to be this: Let no Christian allow himself in any sinful excesses; let him never fill himself with wine or strong drink, or with meat and drink to the full, for that fulness will breed all manner of sensual lusts in him: but let his desires and endeavours be carried out after the grace and Spirit of God, let him be filled therewith; for that fulness will keep the soul holy, the body chaste, and render the Christian fit for the service of God on earth, and meet for the fruition and enjoyment of God in heaven. Take your fill of the Spirit; you can never be overfilled.

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

The apostle, in the foregoing verse, cautions the Ephesians against that drunkenness and uncleanness which did commonly attend them at the solemnities of their heathen gods: their *Bacchanalia*, or feasts dedicated to Bacchus the god of wine, were usually concluded with excessive drunkenness and uncleanness. In these drunken feasts they had their drunken hymns, which they sung to their drunken deity, in praise of him whom they called the god of wine. Now in opposition to these drunken and impure songs, the apostle exhorts the Christian Ephesians to sing the psalms of David, or the hymns composed by spiritual men, such as Zachariah and Simeon, or by the *afflatus* of the Holy Spirit, which in those times did immediately inspire persons both to pray and sing in their assemblies, 1 Cor. xiv. 15, singing these with the mouth, and also *making melody in your heart to the Lord.* Note here, The hearts and spirits of good men are full of spiritual mirth and joy: they are as merry in the Lord as sinners in their lusts; that it is lawful and laudable for them to express their mirth, and give vent to their spiritual joy, by singing; that psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, do best become their mouths when they perform those spiritual exercises; that, in singing these, there must be an inward harmony, and musical melody, in the soul and heart, as well as in the tongue; besides a melodious tuning of the voice, the exercise of the understanding, and the orderly motions of the affections, must accompany them that will make melody in the heart to the Lord in their singing. Singing of psalms then, both in public assemblies and in private families, and sounding forth the high praises of God for mercies received, is a special duty, to be jointly performed by all persons capable of it; *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns.*

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

The next duty St. Paul exhorts to, is that of spiritual *thanksgiving*. Where note, 1. The time when it ought to be performed: *always*; that is, at least every day, and upon every solemn occasion, keeping the heart continually in a praising, as well as a praying, frame. Note, 2. The matter for which we are to give thanks: *For all things*; that is, 1. For all providences, whether prosperous or adverse; for sickness as well as health, God intending our good for both. 2. For all mercies, for sparing mercy, preventing mercy, recovering mercy, for common benefits, for pec-

liar and distinguishing favours, for mercies received, for mercies expected, for what we have in hand, and what we have in hope. Note, 3. The Person to whom our thanksgivings are to be offered: to God and the Father, to God our Creator, to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father in him. Note, 4. The person through whom our thanksgivings are acceptable unto God: *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*. As all spiritual addresses, both of praise and thanksgiving, must be offered up to God; so their acceptance with God is only to be expected by or through our Lord Jesus Christ.

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body. 24 Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands, in every thing.

Our apostle having exhorted the Ephesians to such general duties as belong to all Christians, comes now to exhort them to the practice of relative duties, as they are members of societies, and particularly as they live in a family society one with another, as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants; much of the life and power of religion appearing in the conscientious practice and performance of religious duties. But first he gives them a general direction to *submit themselves one to another in the fear of God*, that is, by yielding and mutually condescending to each other, stooping to the meanest office of love and kindness one towards another; and this *in the fear of God*, that is, either in obedience to the command of God, which enjoins this submission, for then we perform our duty one towards another acceptably, and as we ought, when we eye the command of God in what we do: or else *in the fear of God*, that is, making the fear of God the rule and measure of our submission one to another; for we are by no means bound to submit ourselves in order to the pleasing of our neighbours, any farther than is consistent with that subjection and obedience which we owe to God. Learn hence, That where that noble and divine principle of the fear of God prevailth in the heart, it will make a man conscientiously careful of his duty towards man: the fear of God in him will have both the force of a motive to quicken

him up unto, and also of a rule to guide and direct him in, that submission, which, in obedience to God is due and payable to his neighbours. Having laid down this general rule, now he comes to press us to the practice of particular duties, *Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, &c.* Note here, He begins with the wife's duty first, before the husband's, probably because her duty of entire subjection is the most difficult duty, and that being conscientiously discharged, is a compelling motive to the husband to set about his duty in like manner. Note, 2. The particular and special duty which the wife is exhorted to: and that is submission, *Wives, submit yourselves*. This supposes the wife's due esteem of, and her affectionate love unto, her husband, as the root of this submission. Note, 3. The universality and extensive nature of the command: it is to all wives, to pay this tribute of subjection to their own husbands; no honour, superiority, or antecedent dignity in the wife, no personal infirmity, no moral infirmity, nay, no error in religion, can give a discharge from this obligation: there is no wife, whatever her birth and breeding, whatever her parts or privileges may be, that is exempted from this tie of subjection to her husband; for the law of nature, the ordinance of God, and her own voluntary covenant and promise in marriage, do oblige and bind her to it. Yet, note, 4. The qualification and manner of this submission: it must be *as unto the Lord*; that is, in obedience to the command of the Lord, who has given the husband power over the wife, and required and will reward, her obedience to him; or else, *as unto the Lord*, it pointeth out a similitude, and likeness, and resemblance, in the wife's subjection to the husband, with that which they owe to Christ the Lord; that is, it must not be feigned, but sincere; it must not be constrained, but willing, from a complacency taken in the doing of this duty. And lastly, *as unto the Lord*, that is, in all lawful things; the wife is by no means to obey the husband in any commands which are contrary to that submissive obedience which she owes to Christ, her supreme Lord. Now, with this limitation, the wife, in subjecting herself to her husband, is subject unto the Lord. Note, 5. The reason given by the Holy Ghost for enforcing this duty of submissive obedience upon wives, *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, &c.* that is, the wife ought to submit herself to her husband, because, 1. He is her head; and, 2. Therein doth resemble Christ's headship over his church.

Observe here, That this metaphor of an head, applied to the husband, denotes both the dignity and duty of the husband: it implies his eminency by reason of his sex; it implies his authority to govern and direct, as the head has power to guide and govern the whole body; and it points out his duty, as well as his dignity: as the head is the seat of wisdom and knowledge, so husbands should be endowed with greater measures of knowledge, and prudence, to enable them to guide and govern in the place God has set them. And further, the apostle would have wives consider and observe that God will have some resemblance of Christ's authority over the church, held forth in the husband's authority over the wife. Is Christ an head of dominion and direction also to his church? so should the husband be to his wife. Doth Christ exercise his dominion and power over the church, not rigidly and tyrannically, but with meekness and gentleness? so should the husband rule. In a word, is Christ the Saviour of the body meritoriously? so should the husband be ministeriously, to defend the wife from injuries, to supply her necessities, and to improve his whole power and authority over her for her good. Note, 6. The manner of this subjection specified and declared: as the church is subject, so let the wife be subject. Is the church subject to Christ willingly, cheerfully, dutifully, delightfully? so let the wife be subject. Doth the church subject itself to Christ universally? so let the wife be subject in all things; not absolutely in all things, but in all things lawful, godly, and honest; nothing is excepted out of the wife's subjection to her husband, but that which is contrary to her duty to him who commanded this subjection; when there appears little discretion in the husband's command, then there will appear a great sense of duty in the wife's obedience.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it: 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word; 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish.

The apostle having propounded the wife's duty first, recommends the husband's duty next; her's was the duty of submission; his, of love and entire affection. This the apostle mentions, because

the husband, for want of love, is too ready to abuse that sovereignty and superiority which God has given over his wife, by proving rigorous and bitter unto her; therefore, says he, *Husbands, love your wives*, that is, with a special, peculiar, conjugal love, such as no other must share in. This duty of love is very comprehensive, and it includes a very affectionate regard to her, tender care over her, cohabitation with her, contentment and satisfaction in her alone, a patient bearing with her weaknesses, a prudential hiding of her infirmities, a providing a supply of her wants suitable to her rank, a readiness to instruct and direct her, a willingness to pray for her, and with her. Where true conjugal love is found, these duties included will be performed. Observe next, As the apostle propounded the church for a pattern of subjection to the wife, so he propounds Christ as a pattern of love to husbands: *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church*. Did he love his church with an active and operative love, with a real and sincere love, with an entire and undivided love, with a lasting and constant love, notwithstanding all his church's weaknesses and failings? such ought the husband's love to be, that is, every husband to his own wife. No meanness of birth, no want of education, no homeliness of person, no forwardness of disposition in the wife, will discharge the husband from the obligation of this duty towards her: Christ's example has both the force of an argument to excite us to it, and is also an exact rule to guide and direct us in it: *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church*. Observe farther, The instances and evidences which Christ has given of his love unto his church; he gave himself for her, *that he might sanctify and cleanse, and present her to himself a glorious church, without spot or blemish*. Here note, 1. The church's polluted and impure condition supposed, before Christ gave himself for her; the church in herself was, as the world is, polluted, otherwise she had stood in no need of Christ's washing and cleansing. Note, 2. The care of Christ to purify and cleanse his church from this pollution; he gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her; he loved her, and washed her from her sins in his own blood. Note, 3. The instrumental means of the church's sanctification; it was with the *washing of water, by the word*; the word and sacraments are the great instrumental means, in the hand of Christ, by which he applies the virtue and efficacy of his death, for the sanctifying and cleansing of his church and children. Note, 4.

The holy and glorious condition which the church shall be found in at the great marriage-day : *without spot or wrinkle ; that he might, at the last day, present her to himself, a spotless spouse, a glorious church, having no spot of sin, or wrinkle of deformity, or any such imperfect thing, but be perfectly beautiful, holy, and without blemish ; intimating that the church hath her spots and wrinkles now in her militant state ; but when Christ shall at last present the church triumphant to himself, then shall she be like himself, without spot. Blessed be God, believers have now a righteousness in Christ, without spot or wrinkle ; then shall they have an holiness in themselves, without spot or wrinkle ; nothing of imperfection cleaving to them, or inhering in them. The blood of Christ has already perfectly justified, and thoroughly cleansed, believers from sin's guilt ; ere long the Spirit of Christ will perfectly cleanse them from all sin's filth. O, what a pure and spotless, what a perfect and beautiful creature, will the church come out of Christ's hands, and be presented to the Father, at the great day, in the shining beauty of perfect holiness ! God strengthen our faith in the belief of it, and prepare us for the full fruition and final enjoyment of it.*

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh ; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church ; 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

Our apostle here propounds a farther argument to enforce this duty of love from husband to wife, taken from that near conjunction between them, showing that they are one flesh and one body, not in a natural, but in a relative sense ; and accordingly a man should so love his wife even as himself. Doth a man love himself superlatively, cordially, tenderly, industriously, perseveringly ! So ought he to love his wife. Will a man be out of love with himself, much less hate himself, though he be deformed, or by some accident maimed ! In like manner ought not any natural defect, or accidental mischance, to cause a remission, much less a cessation, of the man's love unto his own wife ; as it is an unnatural thing for a man to hate his own flesh personal, so his own flesh relational. Again, a man is so far from hating his own flesh, that he nourisheth and cherisheth it with the utmost care and tenderness : in like manner ought he to be kind to, and

tender over, his civil-self, the wife of his bosom ; in imitation likewise of Christ's example, who nourishes and cherishes his church, as being *flesh of his own flesh, and bone of his own bone* : that is, as near to one another by a mystical and spiritual union, as Adam and Eve were by a matrimonial union. O stupendous privilege, for believers and Christ to be as one flesh ! Husband and wife are not so near, soul and body are not so near, as Christ and believers are to each other.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery : but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself ; and the wife see that she reverence *her* husband.

Here the apostle uses a farther argument to excite the husband's love to his espoused wife, taken from the law of marriage, which maketh them two one flesh in a civil sense ; therefore the man should leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife : not that their obligations cease to their parents, or as if they were to cast off natural affection to them ; but he shows, that there is a nearer union betwixt husband and wife, than betwixt parents and child, and that the bonds of matrimonial love are stronger than those of nature. Their being said to be *one flesh*, implies a most strict union, and most intimate communion, and whereby they have one interest, common goods, common friends, yea, and all things common, as if they were but one person ; but the apostle further intimates to us, at the 31st verse, that this matrimonial union betwixt man and wife, was designed by God, to shadow forth and represent that mystical union which is betwixt Christ and his church. Doth the conjugal union give the wife an interest in the estate and honour of the husband, be she never so meanly descended in herself ! in like manner, from the saints' union with Christ, does there immediately result a sweet and blessed communion or fellowship with Christ in grace and spiritual privileges ; all that Christ is, and has, is theirs by communication to them, or improvement for them ; well might the apostle therefore say, *This is a great mystery, &c.* In the 33d verse, the apostle shuts up his discourse upon this argument, with a repeated exhortation to

the husband to love his wife, and to the wife to reverence her husband. *Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself: "so love,"* that is, with an extensive love, reaching the whole person, soul and body; with an intensive love, above all persons and relatives whatsoever; with an hearty love, without dissimulation; with an holy love, without alteration; and with great love, beyond comparison. *And let the wife see that she reverence her husband.* The great duty which the wife owes to her husband is reverence. This is made up of three ingredients; namely, estimation, love, and fear: the wife that reverences her husband, esteems him, and dares not think meanly of him; her esteem of him provokes her love unto him; and her love of him is accompanied with an ingenuous fear to offend and grieve him; and the wife expresses this reverence in her gestures, by a respectful demeanour towards him; in her speeches to him when with her, and of him when absent from her, always mentioning him with respect and honour; in her actions, by complying with his desires, by following his directions, by hearkening to his reproofs, and by her cheerful and respectful behaviour towards him at all times, and in all places, as well at home as abroad before the world. And that the wife may thus reverence her husband, let her be earnest with God in prayer, for wisdom and understanding, for prudence and patience, for humility and meekness: a proud spirit would not agree with an angel, but the humble will agree with any person.

CHAP. VI.

CHILDREN, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise,) 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

Our apostle, in the foregoing chapter, began to treat of relative duties, and concluded that chapter with the duties of husbands and wives; he begins this with the duty of children and parents to each other. And here we have observable, that he begins with the duty of the inferior first, of the child to the parents, as he did before with the duty of the wife, chap. v. 22. He first puts them in mind of their duty who are to obey; that being the most difficult duty, and the persons concerned in it usually more defective, and the work less easy and pleasing to our nature. Observe,

2. The important duty which children are directed to: the duty of obedience and honour: *Children, obey: honour your father and mother.* This duty of honour and obedience implies inward reverence, and a lawful estimation of their persons, and honouring of them in heart, speech, and behaviour; it implies also outward observance, a pious regard to their instructions, executing all their commands which are not sinful, depending on their counsels, and following their good examples, owning with thankfulness their parents' care and concern for them, and covering the failings and infirmities found in them. Observe, 3. The object of this duty: both parents, not the father alone, or the mother only, but both father and mother jointly. *Children, obey your parents; honour thy father and thy mother:* as obedience belongeth to all children, of what age, or sex, or condition soever, so are children obliged to obey both parents, the mother as well as the father, yea, she is named first, *Lev. xix. 3;* her sex being weaker, she is the more subject to contempt; and because the mother, in old age, is liable to be despised, God has particularly guarded about her, by his positive and express command, to free her from contempt, *Prov. xxiii. 22,* saying, *Hearken to thy father which beget thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.* Observe, 4. The noble principle from whence this obedience in children to parents ought to flow, namely, from the fear of God. *Obey them in the Lord;* that is, in obedience to his command, and in all things agreeable to his will, fearing his displeasure in case of disobedience: let not your obedience be barely natural and prudential, but christian and religious. Observe, 5. The arguments used by our apostle to excite to the practice of this duty. The first argument is drawn from the equity of it, *This is right;* that is, the law of God and nature requires it. The great motive, which ought to excite us to the practice of any duty, is not so much the advantageousness, as the righteousness and equity, of the duty, as being commanded by God, and well pleasing in his sight: *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* A second argument is, because this is the first commandment of the second table, which has a particular promise annexed to it: *This is the first commandment with promise,* that is, with an express promise; for every commandment hath both a promise and a threatening implied in it, and annexed to it; but this is the first commandment with a promise expressed, and that is a promise of long life, *That thy days may be long; and*

this promise is always fulfilled, either in kind or in equivalency, either by enjoying a long life on earth, or a better life in heaven. Learn hence, That although our first and chief motive to obedience be the equity and righteousness of what God requires, yet we may, as a secondary encouragement, have respect to the promised reward, and particularly to the temporal advantage of our obedience. Long life is here promised to children, as an encouragement to obedience, which is in itself a very valuable mercy and blessing; and having eyed the command of God in the first place, they may and ought to have respect to the recompense of reward in the next place.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Here the duty of both parents to their children is laid down. Where note, 1. The apostle's dehortation, or negative precept, *Provoke not your children to wrath*, that is, Be not too severe towards them, abuse not your parental power over them, provoke them not, nor embitter their spirits against you; by denying them what is convenient for them, by inveighing with bitter words against them, by unjust, unseasonable, or immoderate correction of them. To provoke or stir up any to sin, especially young ones, and particularly our children, renders us guilty before the Lord of all that sin which they have committed through our provocation: *Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath*. Note, 2. St. Paul's positive injunction given unto parents, *Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. Where, 1. He directs to their education, *Bring them up*. 2. To join nurture and admonition with their education, *Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*; that is, give them good instruction, withhold not early correction, set before them good example, begin with them betimes, and suffer not the devil, the world, and the flesh, to bespeak them for their service before you engage them for God's; and remember, that there is a tie of nature, a tie of interest, and a tie of religion, which parents are under thus to do: *Provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture, &c.*

5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; 6 Not with eye-service, as men-pleas-

ers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; 7 With good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; 8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

Observe here, 1. The general duty incumbent upon servants: that of obedience to their masters, according to the flesh, that is, in temporal things only; obey your earthly masters in things pertaining to the world, leaving the soul and conscience to God only, who alone is the sovereign Lord of it. Christian liberty is not inconsistent with civil subjection; such as are God's freemen may be servants to men, though not the servants of men; and, as servants, obedience is their duty in all lawful things. Observe, 2. The qualifications and properties of this obedience, which is due and payable from servants to masters. 1. It must be with *fear and trembling*, that is, with fear of displeasing them; yet they must not act barely from fear, but out of love, both to God and their master. 2. It must be in *singleness of heart*, in great simplicity and sincerity of spirit, without guile, hypocrisy, and dissimulation. 3. They must eye their great Master in heaven, in all the services they perform to their masters here on earth, *not with eye-service*. But how should servants have an eye to their great Master in heaven? *Ans.* They should have an eye to the presence of their great Master, to the glory of their great Master, to the command of their great Master, and to the assistance and acceptance of their Master in heaven. Learn hence, That our eyeing of God in all the services we perform, and making him the judge and spectator of all our actions, will be a singular help to make us sincere and single-hearted in all we do, and in all we design. Again, 4. Their service must be performed with *good-will*, that is, with cheerfulness and delight, not grudgingly, unpleasantly, or from fear of punishment only; eyeing the Lord Christ in all that service they do for men. Learn hence, That the meanest and basest services and employments, in the place and station which Gods sets us in, being done with right qualifications, with faithfulness and cheerfulness, from right motives, and for right ends, is service done to Christ, and as such shall be accepted and rewarded by him: *With good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men*. Observe lastly, The reward which the Holy Ghost propounds, as an encouragement to poor

servants in their obedience to their masters, and that is, the assurance of a reward from God, whatever disappointment they meet with from men; *knowing that whatever a man doth out of obedience to the Lord, a reward of the same shall he receive, whether he be a poor bond-servant, or a free man and master.* Note here, How the basest drudgery of servants, when performed in obedience to God, and with an eye at his glory, is called here *a good work*, and shall not fail of a good reward. *Whatsoever good thing any man doeth*: when a poor servant scours a ditch, or does the meanest drudgery, God will reward him for it; for he looketh not at the beauty, splendour, and greatness, of the work, but at the integrity and honesty of the workman; the mean and outwardly base works of poor servants, when honest and sincere, shall find acceptance with God, and be rewarded by him, as well as the more splendid, honourable, and expensive works of their rich masters: *the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.*

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

Here the master's duty to his servant is directed to, both generally, and more particularly; in general, he directs masters to *do the same things* to their servants; not the same things for kind, but for manner of doing them; that is, in obedience to the same command of God, with an eye to the same glory of God, with the same singleness of heart, with the same love and good-will. Here note, That the greatest masters, yea, the greatest prince and potentate upon earth, lie under obligations, in point of duty, to their servants and inferiors; and it ought to be as much their care to discharge their duty sincerely, cheerfully, with good-will, and eyeing their great Master in heaven, as it concerns the poorest sinner to obey them in and after the same manner; *Ye masters, do the same things unto them.* Next follow the particular directions given to masters; namely, *to forbear threatening*; that is, let them not exercise their authority over them imperiously, and with rigour, but mildly, and with gentleness: rule them not tyrannically, but govern with moderation and temper. Lord, how ordinary is it for men in place and power a little above others, to insult over and trample upon others, forgetting that there is one above them, whom they must be accountable unto themselves! *Forbear threatening, knowing that your Master also is in*

heaven, with whom there is no respect of persons. Here we have Almighty God described two ways: 1. From his magnificence and stately palace, in which his illustrious glory shineth: *Your Master is in heaven*; not as if he were only there, and not elsewhere, but eminently there, though every where else. 2. God is here described by his justice and impartiality in judging: *There is no respect of persons with him*; that is, when the rich master and poor servant come to stand upon a level before him, he will not respect either of them for their outward circumstance, but as a just judge, reward them both, according to their works. Thus our apostle concludes this exhortation to the practice and performance of relative duties, between husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant. He now closes his epistle with a special exhortation to all Christians, to look upon themselves as spiritual soldiers, listed under Christ's exalted banner, engaged in a continual warfare with the world, and the prince of the world; and accordingly he bespeaks them in a martial phrase to the end of the chapter.

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Our apostle, calling us here forth to the Christian warfare, gives forth the first word of encouragement to battle: *Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.* A Christian, above all men, needs resolution, and a daring courage: if he be possessed with fear, he is unfit to go into the field; if dispirited with strong impressions of danger, how unready for the encounter! Cowards win neither earth nor heaven. But where lies the Christian's strength? Verily, on the Lord, and not in himself; the strength of the whole host of saints lies in the Lord of hosts, and accordingly it ought to be the Christian's great care, in all difficulties and dangers, to strengthen his faith in the almighty power of God. Observe, 2. A direction given how a saint may come to be strong in the Lord; namely, by putting on the whole armour of God; that is, by being clothed with the following graces, which are hereafter mentioned in this chapter; as, the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit, &c. Now these are called armour of God, because they are of his appointment and institution; and of his make and constitution; and this armour must be put on, that is, our grace kept in continual exercise

It is one thing to have armour in the house, and another to have it buckled on in the field; it is not sufficient to have grace in the habit and principle, but it is grace in act and exercise that must conquer spiritual enemies. Observe, 3. A reason assigned why the Christian is to be thus completely armed: *That he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*; intimating that the devil is one chief enemy we have to combat with in the Christian warfare, and that this enemy is a wily, subtle enemy, discovering his dangerous policy, first by tempting and alluring into sin, and then by vexing and tormenting for sin. But Satan, with all his wits and wiles, shall never finally vanquish (though he may, in a particular battle, overcome) a soul clad with spiritual armour; nay, he that hath this armour of God on, shall certainly vanquish and overcome him: *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against, &c.*

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

The apostle mentioned our enemy in the former verse; here he describes the combat in this verse, *We wrestle*. A Christian's life is a perpetual warfare, a continual wrestling; but with what, and with whom? *Ans.* Negatively, *Not with flesh and blood*; that is, not only or chiefly with flesh and blood, with human enemies; but we must grapple and contend with angelical powers, with devils, who are principalities and powers, &c. Note here, How the devil and his angels are described: 1. By their prince-like authority and government which they exercise in the world, called therefore principalities and powers, to denote that Satan is a great and mighty prince: a prince that has the heart and knee of all his subjects. 2. By the seat of his empire: he rules in this world, not in the other; the highest the devil can go, is the air; heaven fears him not. And he is *a ruler of the darkness of this world*: that is, in such sinners as labour under the darkness of sin and ignorance. 3. Satan and his angels are here described by their spiritual nature, called *spiritual wickedness*, that is, wicked spirits: intimating to us, that the devils are spirits; that they are spirits extremely wicked; and that these wicked spirits do chiefly annoy Christians with, and provoke them to, spiritual wickedness. 4. They are described by their residence or place of abode: *in high places*; that is, in the air, of which he is called the

prince. From the whole, note, How plainly Christ our captain deals with all his soldiers, and the difference between Christ's dealing with his followers, and Satan with his: Satan durst not let sinners know who that God is whom they fight against, but Christ is not afraid to show his saints their enemy in all his power and strength; well he might, because the weakness of God is stronger than the powers of hell.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Observe here, 1. How our apostle having described the enemy in the foregoing verse, and set him forth in all his formidable strength and power, comes forth in the head of his Ephesian camp, gives a fresh alarm, and bids them arm! arm! *Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day*; intimating that an evil day is before us; that it will be of mighty advantage to us to be able to stand in the evil day; and that without the help of divine armour we cannot stand in that day. The sanctifying graces of God's Spirit are this armour: he that has not these, let his common gifts be never so gay and glorious, he will never hold out to fight the last battle, but fall into the enemy's hand, and be taken captive by him at his will. Observe next, How our apostle comes to describe the armour of God piece by piece, which the Christian is to put on before he takes the field against the enemy. Here is the soldier's girdle, his breastplate, his shoes, his shield, his helmet, and his sword, all described; his offensive and defensive weapons, wherewith soldiers of old used to arm their bodies from head to foot. Now the apostle assigneth to particular graces a use and excellency answerable to these pieces of

armour, and shows that there is some resemblance between every grace and that piece of the bodily armour to which it is here compared; but observable it is, that although there be pieces of armour for all other parts of the body, here is none assigned for the back, nor back-parts, because there must be no running away, no hope of escaping by flight in this spiritual warfare: if we turn our back upon our enemy, we lie open to his darts, and are in danger of destruction; if we fight on, we have our second in the field, and are sure of victory, provided we enter the field in order, and stand to our arms, maintain our watch, keep our ground, and appear armed *cap-a-pie*, from head to foot, with the several pieces of armour here recommended: the first of which is the girdle of truth, ver. 14. *Having your loins girt about with truth*; that is, sincerity of heart. Doth a girdle or belt adorn the soldier? so doth sincerity adorn the Christian. Doth the girdle strengthen the soldier's loins? so doth sincerity strengthen the soul, and every grace in the soul: it is sincere faith that is strong faith; it is sincere love that is mighty love. Secondly, *The breastplate of righteousness*; by which is to be understood the love and practice of universal holiness. But why is this compared to a breastplate? *Ans.* Because as the breastplate defends the most principal parts of the body, where the heart and vitals are closely couched together; thus holiness preserves the soul and conscience, the principal parts of a Christian, from the wounds and harms of sin, which is the weapon that Satan uses to give conscience its deadly stab with. The third piece of Christian armour is the spiritual shoe, fitted to the soldier's foot, and worn by him so long as he keeps the field against sin and Satan: the soldier's way is sometimes full of sharp stones, and sometimes strewed with sharp iron spikes stuck into the ground; the soldier will soon be wounded, or foundered, if not well shod. Therefore the direction here is, *Let your feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*; that is, maintaining an holy readiness of spirit, and a resolute frame of heart, to undergo any suffering, and endure any hardship in your Christian warfare; which frame of spirit being wrought in us by the doctrine of the gospel, is therefore called the *preparation of the gospel of peace*. The fourth piece of armour recommended above all to be put on, is the *shield of faith*; this is that grace by which we believe the truth of God's word in general, and depend upon Christ in particular, as crucified, for pardon and life, and this upon the warrant of

the promise. But why is faith compared to a shield? *Ans.* Because, as the shield defends the whole body, so faith defends the whole man; the understanding from error, the conscience from seariness, the will from rebellion against the will and command of God. And as the shield defends the whole armour, as well as the soldier's whole body, it defends the breastplate, as well as the breast; so faith is our armour upon armour, a grace that preserves all other graces whatsoever. The fifth piece of armour is mentioned, ver. 17. *The helmet of salvation*; by which the grace of hope is understood, which has for its object salvation, called therefore the hope of salvation. Salvation is the ultimate and comprehensive object of the Christian's expectation; and it is compared to an helmet, because as the helmet defends the head, so doth the hope of salvation defend the soul; it keeps the head above water, and makes the Christian bold and brave. Hope is a grace of singular use and excellent service to a Christian, in the whole course of his Christian warfare; it puts him upon noble services, it keeps him patient under the greatest sufferings, and it will enable the soul to wait long for the performance of divine promises. The sixth piece of spiritual armour is the *sword*, ver. 17. The former were defensive, but this is both an offensive and defensive weapon; such is the word of God. But why compared to a sword? *Ans.* In regard both of its necessity and excellency: the sword was ever esteemed a most necessary and useful part of the soldier's furniture; of such usefulness, necessity, and excellency is the word of God, by which the Christian doth defend himself, and offend his enemies. But why is it called the *sword of the Spirit*? *Ans.* Because the Spirit was the author of it; the Spirit of God is the interpreter of it: and it is the Spirit that gives the word its efficacy and power in the soul: the word of God, contained in the scriptures, is the sword by which the Spirit of God enables his saints to overcome and vanquish all their enemies. The seventh and last piece of spiritual armour is mentioned, ver. 18. and that is *prayer*: *Praying always, with all prayer, &c.* Here note, The time for prayer, *praying always*; the sorts and kinds of prayer, *praying always, with all prayer*: the inward principle of prayer, from which it must flow, *in the Spirit*; the guard to set about the duty of prayer, *watching thereunto*; the constancy to be exercised in the duty, *with all perseverance*, the comprehensiveness of the duty, *for all saints*. Learn, That prayer is a necessary duty for all Christians, and to be used, with

all other pieces of spiritual armour, by the Christian soldier.

19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Our apostle having directed the Ephesians to the duty of prayer in general, desires them here to pray for himself in particular. Where observe, 1. His exhortation and direction to pray for himself, and all the ministers of the gospel: *And for me.* Learn hence, That the ministers of Christ are and ought in a special manner to be remembered in the saints' prayers. Observe, 2. The mercy which he desires them to pray for: *That utterance may be given: namely a readiness to deliver to others what God has handed unto us.* Ministers depend upon God for utterance, and it is their people's duty to be earnest with God to give it to them. Observe, 3. The end why he desires this utterance: *That he may open his mouth boldly to make known the ministry of the gospel.* Where note, 1. The sublime nature of the gospel: it is a mystery. 2. The work of a gospel minister: and that is, to make known that gospel-mystery. 3. The manner how he is to perform this work: *That I may open my mouth boldly: namely, in asserting truth, and in reproving sin, with a wise and prudent, with a meek and humble, with an active and zealous boldness.* Observe, 4. A double argument to back and enforce his request to pray for him: 1. From his office: *For which I am an ambassador.* The ministers of the gospel are God's ambassadors; and shall not their people pray for the success of their embassies! 2. From his afflicted state: *He was an ambassador in bonds; his zeal for God, and his truth, confined him to a prison; he preached himself into a gaol.* Well, therefore, might they pray for him, who had now lost his liberty, and soon after was to lose his life, for them: no prayers can be too much to strengthen the hands, and to encourage the hearts, of such as suffer tribulation and persecution for the sake of Christ: *Pray for me, that I may make known the mysteries of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds.*

21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to

you all things: 22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.

Observe here, 1. The tender love and affectionate regard which St. Paul bore to these Ephesians in the midst of his sufferings, and during his imprisonment: he not only wrote, but sent to them. No doubt, the apostle had but few, very few, fast friends with him at Rome, whom he could repose entire confidence in, and receive great consolation from; however, he will deny himself to serve them. A faithful minister of Jesus Christ is so tenderly affectionate towards his flock, that he prefers their spiritual edification before his own private and particular advantage; though St. Paul was now a prisoner, and under a daily expectation of death, and had few to attend him, yet he sends one of his most beloved friends away to them, choosing rather himself to want an attendant, than that they should want a comforter: nothing better becomes a minister of Christ than a public spirit. Observe, 2. The character of the person whom St. Paul sent unto them; he is described, 1. By his name, *Tychicus.* 2. By his state: he was a brother, that is, a christian, a beloved brother, a brother in Christ. 3. By his office: he was a minister, yea, *a faithful minister in the Lord,* that is, in the work of the Lord; between whom and St. Paul there was a sweet harmony, an happy union of hearts, a joint care and endeavour in carrying on the interest of Christ amongst the churches. Behold, how good and pleasant a thing it is, when ministers of Christ are dear to each other; when instead of divisions, emulations, and strife, amongst them, they can give testimonials of each other, as well-deserving; without endeavouring to conceal and obscure the gifts and graces of God, which are eminent in any of their fellow-labourers, on purpose only to set off themselves, that their own performances may be the more taken notice of. St. Paul was far from this spirit, as appears by the character which, upon a fit occasion, he gave of Tychicus. Observe, 3. The design and end which St. Paul had in sending Tychicus unto them: and that was twofold; 1. That he might acquaint them with St. Paul's condition and state: *That ye might know my affairs, how I do, and what I do, I have sent Tychicus to declare unto you all things.* What! all things without exception! Yes, both doings and sufferings, the apostle was ashamed of neither. Learn, thence, That the life and conversation of ministers, both public and private,

must and ought to be such that they need not be ashamed to have it known, or concerned that the church should know, what they do, how they manage; to the intent that their people may be edified by their conversation, as well as instructed by their preaching; *Tychicus shall declare unto you all things.* The second end St. Paul had in sending Tychicus from himself to the Ephesians was, that he might *comfort their hearts.* But how could Tychicus do this? These ways: 1. By making known to them the true cause of his sufferings. St. Paul's enemies had laid heavy things to his charge, these might perhaps fly as far as Ephesus: now, though the apostle regarded little what the wicked world said of him, yet he desired to be set right in the thoughts of the churches, and accordingly sends Tychicus to acquaint them with the cause of his imprisonment. To keep them from discouragement, and being inordinately cast down at the report of his sufferings. No doubt, St. Paul's chain entered into their souls, and his sufferings were their sorrow; he therefore sends Tychicus, to prevent their immoderate sorrow and mourning upon this account. 3. To comfort their hearts with the report of that holy joy and cheerfulness of spirit which was found with him in and under all his sufferings. O! it is an excellent sight to behold the saints at liberty mourning over their afflicted brethren; and they that are sufferers become comforters of them that are at liberty. Lord! never doth thy holy religion appear more glorious, than when thy ministers commend it by their sufferings for it; and no way can they commend it higher, than by an holy, humble cheerfulness of spirit in their sufferings for it; thy ministers preach with far greater advantage from a prison, than they can from a pulpit. 4. Might not St. Paul send Tychicus now to the church at Ephesus, to engage the churches to pray with earnestness for himself, as well as to comfort them? O! none so covetous of prayers as the ministers of Christ, and no ministers like suffering ministers. St. Paul sets all the churches at work to pray for him in prison; and great reason for it; a prison has its temptations as well as a palace; when men play the persecutors, the devil forgets not to be a tempter; sometimes he will attempt to soften them with impressions of fear; at another time he hopes to overcome them, and weaken their courage, by their friends' tears and entreaties; sometimes the devil hopes to embitter a suffering saint's spirit against his persecutors, and to sour him with the heaven of malice and wrath. O! it is no easy matter to receive evil, and

yet wish none to him from whose hands we have received it; to reserve love for him that shows wrath and hatred to us, is a glorious but a difficult work. But if all this fails, yet the devil hopes to blow him up with pride, and a high conceit of himself, who dares suffer, when others shrink, and is ready to lay down their head, when others pull in their heads, and seek to save themselves in a whole skin. Pride is a salamander, that can live in the very flames of martyrdom; if any saint need the humility of many saints, it is he that is called to suffer for Christ. St. Paul was very sensible of this: he well knew that a suffering condition is full of temptation, that a christian's strength to carry him through it is not in his own keeping, God must help, or the stoutest champion will quail. He also knows that prayer is the best means to fetch in that help; and accordingly St. Paul here sends Tychicus to Ephesus, to engage the auxiliary forces of the saints' prayers on earth, and the *posse celi* from heaven, that he might glorify God in a suffering hour.

23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our apostle being now come to the close and conclusion of this excellent epistle, he shuts it up with very fervent and affectionate wishes and prayers for them. 1. He wishes the brethren, the converted christians, in and about Ephesus, *peace*, peace with God, peace with conscience, peace especially one with another, and all manner of outward prosperity, comprehended in the word *peace*. 2. Mutual love among themselves. 3. The grace of faith, the fountain of the former; all which he wishes from God the Father, not excluding, but including, the Son and Holy Ghost, and from Jesus Christ the Mediator, through virtue of whose merit and intercession all saving benefits are conveyed unto believers. St. Paul's example is instructive to the ministers of Christ in all succeeding ages. Would we have our ministerial endeavours attended with manifest success? we must be much in prayer, in serious and fervent prayer to God, to work those graces in our people, *faith, love, and holiness*, which we have been by our ministry recommending to their care and practice: that minister who is most prayerful is usually most successful.

24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

Still our apostle goes on praying: he

began and closes his epistle with prayer; and the blessings prayed for are grace and peace; peace in the former verse comprehending all temporal felicity; and grace in this comprehending the special favour and loving kindness of God: this he prays may be the portion of all those that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, or incorruption, as the word signifies; that is not for time only, but for eternity; not in show and appearance only, but in reality. Sincere love to our Lord Jesus Christ is a sure character and undoubted mark of such a person as has found grace in God's sight, and is very high in the divine favour. *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ*; he doth not say with a seraphim's, but with a sincere, love. *Quest.* But when, and how,

may a person know that he loves Christ in great sincerity? *Ans.* If Christ be enthroned in thy heart as a chief commander; if he be esteemed by thee as thy chiefest excellency, and thy choicest treasure; if he be thy chiefest delight and joy; and if he be thy chiefest refuge, unto which thou fliest in all dangers and distresses; thou mayest conclude thy supreme love is placed upon him, that thou lovest him in sincerity. And the more thou lovest him, the more lovely wilt thou be unto him, and the more will thy heart be let out in desires after him, and in fervent longings for the full fruition and final enjoyment of him; for those whom we love we long to be with.

*Come then, Lord! down to me,
Or take me up to thee.*

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

St. Paul being warned by the Holy Ghost to go into Macedonia and preach the gospel, as we find, Acts xvi. he plants first a church at Philippi, a principal city in Macedonia, so called from Philip, king of Macedon, who beautified and enlarged it.

But St. Paul's charge being to preach the gospel to all the Gentiles, he travels from place to place, till he came to Rome, where he was in bonds, and consequently in necessity and straits; which the Philippians understanding, they sent Epaphroditus their bishop or chief minister to him, with a liberal contribution, to supply his wants: by whom St. Paul sends this affectionate letter to them, partly to testify his thankfulness for the relief received from them, but principally to confirm them in the faith, to prevent their being offended at his sufferings for the gospel, to encourage them to walk worthy of the gospel, to warn them against seducers and judaizing teachers, and to quicken them to divers christian duties. And so concludes his epistle with particular salutations, and an apostolical benediction.

CHAP. I.

The design and scope of our apostle in this first chapter, is to encourage the Philippians to constancy in the faith, to perseverance in holiness; not to be discouraged at his sufferings for the gospel, seeing christianity had already gained very much, and would, he was very confident, gain much more, by the sufferings he underwent for the sake of the gospel. Accordingly he exhorts them to courage and constancy, by several weighty arguments, to the end of the chapter.

PAUL and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons;

Observe here, 1. The penman of this epistle, St. Paul, joining Timotheus with him in the salutation, because his companion and fellow-labourer, and one that had assisted in the instructing of the Philippians, and was a person much valued and esteemed by them. Observe, 2. The great modesty of St. Paul, in the character he gives of himself; he doth not style himself here an apostle, but the servant of Jesus Christ; in his other epistles, which he wrote alone, he styles himself an apostle, *Rom. i. 1; Gal. i. 1, &c.* He doth not say here, Paul an apostle, and Timotheus a servant of Jesus Christ, magnifying himself above Timothy, but sets himself upon a level with him, saying, *Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ.* Learn hence, 1. That true humility teaches chris-

tians to speak sparingly of themselves, and of their own authority and credit, except upon a just and necessary occasion, and when weighty reasons do urge and oblige them to it. Learn, 2. That the ministers and dispensers of the gospel are, in a special manner, the servants of Jesus Christ, wholly devoted to his service, and discharging themselves faithfully in the performance of it. Observe, 3. The superscription of this epistle, or the persons to whom it was directed: *To all the saints in Christ Jesus*, in general, *which were at Philippi*, and *to the bishops and deacons.* To all the saints at Philippi; so he calls them, because they were all holy by visible profession, and many of them, no doubt, by real sanctification, being inherently, as well as externally, holy; and the denomination is here taken from the better, though not from the greater, part, for whose sake the whole community are here called saints. But why saints in Christ Jesus? Because as it is necessary, to make a man internally holy, that he be in Christ Jesus by a real implantation; so, to denominate a man externally and federally holy, requires a visible profession, and an external union with Christ, *John xv. 2.* In particular, this epistle is directed to the *bishops and deacons*: they were both the church's overseers; the bishops, to oversee and inspect the lives and manners of persons; the deacons, to oversee the necessities of

persons, and to serve the church in taking care of the poor. Note here, The great and special care which our holy Lord has taken of his church, in appointing stated officers to undertake the oversight of his whole family, to rule and govern, to direct and instruct it; yea, not only has he appointed officers for the oversight of the souls of his people, but others to inspect their bodily necessities, that those who are indigent might be supplied by their care, and the charity of the church: *To the saints at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.*

2 Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace from God the Father, or grace from God as a Father; intimating, that God bestows not his grace as a Creator, but as a Father, as a Father in Christ. *And peace from our Lord Jesus Christ*; he being the purchaser of our peace; he, upon whom was laid the chastisement of our peace, and in whom, and for whose sake, God becomes reconciled to us, and at peace with us. Learn hence, 1. That such as have received most grace from God, do yet stand in need of further measures, and fresh supplies of it: grace to pardon sin, and grace to subdue sin. 2. That peace, as well as grace, may and ought to be the subject of a Christian's prayer and care, to obtain peace with God, peace with conscience, peace with one another, and, if it be possible, peace with all men.

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. 4 (Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,) 5 For your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now;

Observe, 1. The proper character of a gospel minister: he is his people's constant remembrancer, and the rememberer of his people: *I remember you all*, says the apostle, *I remember you always, and in every prayer.* This is a very great part of our ministerial duty, to pray for the people; and not in our public offices only, but in our private addresses also, and this continually, without ceasing; we should never rise off our knees, without bearing our people upon our hearts before the Lord. Did minister and people strive more together in their prayers one for another, there would be less strife and contention between them one with another. Ministers must be their people's remembrancers; St. Paul here remembered the Philippians, *all the Philippians always*, and in

every prayer. Observe, 2. St. Paul could and did remember the Philippians with joy: though he was in sadness himself in a prison, yet he could think of them, as a people converted by his ministry, with joy; *making request with joy.* When the ministers of Christ see any success of their labours in the lives of their people, it is a matter of inexpressible joy to them, how sad soever the case is with them as to their outward circumstances; when they sigh in a prison with respect to their personal sufferings, they can sing and rejoice, if they find their people's proficiency in knowledge and growth in grace: *I thank my God for you, making request with joy.* Observe, 3. The ground and occasion of this his joy, ver. 5. *For your fellowship in the gospel*; that is, for your ready embracing of the gospel at my first preaching of it to you, for the real subjection of some, and the professed subjection of all, to the faith of Christ, whereby you were brought into fellowship with Christ and his church; and also for the continuance of you, in the faith and profession of the gospel, *from the first day until now.* Learn hence, That when a people, upon the plain and persuasive preaching of the gospel, do readily receive and obey it, and remain constant in their profession of it, and obedience to it, it is matter of unspeakable thanksgiving and praise to the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ. *I thank God for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now*, that is, for continuing in the faith, and persevering in your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, I bless God for this.

6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Here we have a further cause assigned of St. Paul's joy on the Philippians' behalf: namely, the firm and full assurance which he had of their perseverance in grace unto the end. God, that has begun, will perfect, that is, augment and increase it, till it arrive at perfection in glory. Note here, 1. The nature of grace described, or the proper title deservedly given to the grace of God; it is called a *good work*; *he that hath begun a good work, &c.* Well may regenerating grace be called a *good work*, because it is the living foundation and vital principle from whence all good works do proceed and flow; the grace of God in the heart is the root of all true holiness in the life; as good works are necessary to salvation, so renewing grace is necessary to good works. Note, 2. As the

nature of grace described, so the author and augmentor of grace declared, and that is, God. *He that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it*, that is, augment it, and increase it. As the good work of grace in the heart is God's work, and he is the author of it, so he will maintain it, and carry it on to perfection, and be both the increaser and perfecter of it; God never doth his work by halves. Note, 3. The certainty of grace asserted: *Being confident of this very thing*. But what ground had St. Paul for this confidence? *Ans.* Because grace is the care of the whole Trinity: all the Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, do concern themselves both in the production, preservation, and perfection of it; the Father decrees it, the Son purchases it, the Spirit infuses it: the Father begets it, the Son excites it, the Holy Spirit conducts it: and as they all did concur to its production, so did they all co-operate and work together for the preservation of it. Learn hence, That such persons, in whose souls Almighty God has begun a good work of grace, may with much assurance expect by the influence of God's care, and the exercise of their own endeavours, that they shall hold out and persevere in a state of grace unto the end; *until the day of Christ*, that is, the day of judgment.

7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace.

In these words our apostle assigns a ground and reason of that confidence which he expressed himself to have of the Philippians' perseverance in grace and holiness, in the foregoing verse, namely, because they were partakers of the same grace with himself, and were ready to suffer for Christ, as he was; we may warrantably be persuaded of their perseverance in grace unto the end, in whom we see both readiness of obedience to the gospel, and also zealous and cheerful suffering for and in defence of the gospel. Thus did St. Paul here: where observe, the apostle accounted it a grace and favour from God, that he was thought worthy to suffer for the gospel, and the Philippians with him: *Ye are partakers of my grace*. Learn hence, That to suffer bonds and imprisonments for the gospel's sake is a special grace and favour of God, not considered in itself, but in the fruits and consequences of it. A second ground of his confidence was, their respect to him: *I*

have you in my heart, and I find you *have me* in your hearts; you partake of the misery of my bonds, you suffer with me in my sufferings, and sympathize with me in my sorrows. They relieved and refreshed him in his imprisonment, which he underwent for the sake of Christ and his gospel; and from hence he had a good confidence that they would persevere unto the end. An operative love to the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, especially when they are under persecution, is a good evidence of the sincerity of their love to Christ, and of their steadfastness and perseverance in grace unto the end.

8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

These words are expressive of that passionate degree of Christian love which St. Paul bore to the Philippians; he durst appeal to God, as to the sincerity and fervency of it: *God is my record*, I call him to witness, and can appeal to him as the searcher of hearts, *how greatly I long after you*; that is, how passionately and sincerely I love you, with the most intense and hearty affection, *in the bowels of Jesus Christ*. The expression may denote the efficient cause, and the exemplary cause, of his love. 1. That the author of this his love unto them was Christ, he was the spring and procurer of it; and consequently it was no carnal or selfish love, to serve his own ends and designs upon them, but truly spiritual. 2. That Christ's love to him was the pattern and example, according to which he loved them, with no common love, but with an entire and intense affection, from the ground of the heart and the most intimate *bowels*: no words can be more expressive of that fervent love and earnest longing which St. Paul had for the welfare of the Philippians; a love which very far exceeds the love of all relations. He doth not say I long after you in the bowels of a father, or in the bowels of an husband, but in the bowels of Jesus Christ; humbly comparing his love towards them to the love of Jesus Christ; not for the degrees of it, not for the fruits and advantages of it, but for the truth and sincerity of it: *I greatly long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ*. Learn hence, That there is no stronger love, no more endeared affection, between any relations upon earth, than between such ministers of Christ and their beloved people, as they have been happily instrumental to convert to God: when present with them, they passionately love them; when absent from them they affectionately

long after them; imitating, as much as they can, their Lord Jesus Christ, both in reality and sincerity, and also in the measure and degree, of endearing affection: *God is my record, how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*

¶ 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment; 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ; 11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

After salutations given by St. Paul to his beloved Philippians, he next pours out his soul in fervent prayer and supplication for them; and the mercy which he prays for is observable, first, namely, growth and proficiency in grace: *This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment*; that their love to God, their love to him, and their love one to another, may yet more and more abound. Love is the root-grace from which most graces spring; therefore he prays for the strengthening of that grace in particular, and that there may be found with them judgment, as well as affection, in the exercise of it: we ought to love judiciously, as well as affectionately. The more judicious a saint grows in his Christian course, and the more understanding and judgment is found with him in the way of his duty; the stronger his grace is, and the more glory will he bring to God. The understanding and judgment being the guiding and leading faculties in man, there can be no more acceptable holiness in the will, than there is knowledge in the understanding. I can hate sin, and love God, no more than I know of the evil of sin, and of the perfections that are in God: the more judicious then a Christian grows, the more his holiness grows; and accordingly St. Paul's prayer is, that they *may grow more and more in knowledge in all judgment*. Observe, 2. The great ends mentioned by the apostle for which he did so earnestly desire their proficiency in knowledge and judgment, and their growth in love, and every other grace; namely, 1. *That they might approve things that are excellent*, that is, all such things as the gospel requires: implying, that the things prescribed to us in the gospel, are things excellent and good for us, things worthy to be prescribed by God, and things reasonable to be practised

by us; and that the approbation of these things, by a steadiness in judgment and practice, is every Christian's duty, and ought to be their great endeavour. 2. That they might be *sincere* in their holy profession, incorrupt and pure both in doctrine and manners. 3. That they might be *without offence*, unblameable in conversation, and be kept from being occasions of stumbling unto others, even to the end of their days. 4. He prays that they may not only be inoffensive persons, but fruitful Christians: *Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God*; that is, that they may abound in good works, undertaken in Christ's strength, and with an eye at God's glory. Learn hence, 1. That a negative holiness is not sufficient to salvation: it is not enough that Christians be harmless and inoffensive towards others, but they must labour after an holy fruitfulness in good works: they must be *filled with all the fruits of righteousness*. Learn, 2. That our works be truly good, and fruits of righteousness, it is necessary that they be done by Christ's strength and assistance, and with an eye at the glory and praise of God, in order to their acceptance: *Filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God*. Learn, 3. That no shorter time ought to be assigned for our inoffensive walking, and fruitfulness in conversation, than the day of our death: *Unto the death of Christ*, says our apostle, that is, till the great reckoning-day, when Christ will render to us our complete reward: if we be faithful and fruitful to the death, we shall then receive the crown of life.

12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; 13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places: 14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Our apostle's design in these words is, to prevent the Philippians' stumbling, and being scandalized at his present sufferings, assuring them that the things which happened to him, through the malice, of his persecutors, have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel, than any ways to the hindrance of it, as they feared. Learn hence, That the sufferings and persecutions which the messengers and minis-

ters of Christ do undergo for the sake of the gospel, are oft-times so overruled by the wisdom of God, that they rather increase than diminish the church, and rather promote than prejudice the interest of the gospel. Next, he declares the special and particular advantages which had redounded to the gospel, by those sufferings which he had patiently endured for the gospel's sake. 1. His bonds in Christ, that is, his imprisonment for the gospel of Christ, were manifest in the *palace*; that is, were manifestly taken notice of in Nero's court, and elsewhere in the city; so that people enquiring into the cause of his sufferings, found that it was not any misdemeanor, but that his preaching and practising the doctrine of Christianity was the only reason of his sufferings. 2. Another advantage which accrued to the church by his bonds, was this, namely, that many ministers of Christ, who preached the word of God far and near, hearing of his constancy under suffering, were both encouraged and emboldened thereby; encouraged to shake off fear, and emboldened to preach Christ with greater resolution. *Many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.* Note here, The title given by this great apostle to the inferior ministers of the gospel: he calls them *brethren*, and *brethren in the Lord*, putting himself and them in mind of their mutual and respective duties, which was to live and love as brethren: to admonish, exhort, and encourage one another, to stand up in defence of the just credit and reputation of one another, and jointly to set their shoulder to the work of Christ together. Note, 2. That the ministers of Christ, observing how God upholds some of their brethren under sufferings and persecutions, should encourage themselves to go on with resolution in the work of the Lord, not fearing their own personal sufferings, knowing that the same assistance which supported one, stands ready to succour others: *The brethren in the Lord waxed confident by my bonds.*

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good-will. 16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. 18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached;

and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Our apostle had declared in the foregoing verses, that several of his brethren in the work of the ministry, through his constancy in suffering, were emboldened to preach Jesus Christ with more resolution than before. But here he discovers, that there was a vast difference between those preachers: all did not preach Christ alike, with the same mind, from the same motives, for the same sincere ends. Some, alas! preach Christ out of envy and strife; that is, envying the success of the apostle's ministry, and endeavouring to draw people off from approving him, to applaud them, hoping to grieve and gall him thereby: but others preached the gospel of Christ of *good-will*, with a purity of intention, and sincerity of affection, both towards Christ and towards himself, who, for the defence of the gospel, now lay in prison. However, seeing Christ was preached and made known by both, by some in pretence, by others in truth, the apostle rejoiced at it, and took comfort in it. Learn hence, 1. That such ministers of the gospel are gladly and joyfully to be heard, who preach Christ and his pure word soundly and truly, with what mind soever, from what motive soever, and for what end soever, they preach Christ and his holy gospel. The word is his which they bring, how vicious soever the person, and how bad soever the intention be of him that brings it; and, if the message be his, it is our duty to receive it without prejudice, be the principle what it will in him that delivers it. Many preach in Christ's name, who perish in his wrath; for Christ takes notice of the inward intention, as well as of the outward action, and observes not only the matter which ministers preach, but the end for which, and the motives from which, they preach, whether from love and good will, or from envy and strife. Learn, 2. That such Christians who find their hearts inflamed with zeal for the glory of Christ, and the salvation of souls, do and will rejoice exceedingly that Christ is preached, whoever the person is, or whatever the principle may be in him that preaches: *If Christ be preached*, says St. Paul, *I therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. 20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now

also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death.

Still our apostle pursues and prosecutes his former design, namely, to prevent the Philippians being offended at his sufferings; and accordingly, he shows that as the gospel of Christ had gained much already, it should gain yet more, by his imprisonment and afflictions, which he was very confident would tend to the furtherance of his salvation, through the help of their prayers, and the supplies of grace from the Spirit of Christ; where, by *salvation* is meant deliverance out of his present sufferings, which he fully expected by the help and benefit of the church's prayers. Great are the expectations of the saints, even as to temporal salvation and outward mercies, from the joint prayers and intercessions of the church of Christ. *This shall turn to my salvation through your prayer.* But if by *salvation* be meant eternal happiness, then his confident persuasion was this, That all the designs of his adversaries against him should be so overruled and ordered by God, that through the influences and supplies of the Holy Spirit, all should work together for good, and his eternal salvation be advanced thereby, through the concurrence and assistance of their prayers. In the 20th verse he tells them, that according to his former expectation and hope, he was resolved that no terror should ever make him ashamed to own the truth of Christ, but that, with a convincing boldness, he would now, as heretofore appear in the defence of it, and that Christ should be *magnified by him in the body, whether by life or death*; that is, whether my life be further prolonged, or be now by martyrdom ended, Christ will be magnified: if I live, the power of Christ will be magnified in my deliverance from death: if I die, his power will be magnified in enabling me to undergo death for his name and sake: so that I am at a point, either to live or die, as the wisdom of Christ shall determine; I am, as to myself, indifferent for either, well knowing that Christ will be glorified in me, and by me, both by life and death. Learn hence, That nothing lies so near the heart of a saint as the honour and glory of Christ: this he resolves shall be promoted by him, living and dying; by his great services, supposing his life, and by his extraordinary sufferings and martyrdom, in case of his death.

21 For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

Our apostle had declared, in the foregoing verse, his firm expectation that Christ would be magnified and glorified by him, both in life and death; in this verse he discovers what reason he had to think so; for, says he, *To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*; that is, If I live, Christ shall be the scope of my life, and the end of my living; I resolve to live to his service; if I die, death will be a real gain and advantage to me; intimating, that both life and death are gain to a good man, and that it is Christ that makes both life and death gainful and advantageous. *To me to live is Christ, to die is gain.* Words both short and sweet, few in expression, but large in extension: in them we are taught both how to live, and how to die.—Observe, 1. The scope and end of a Christian's life, *To me to live is Christ.* 2. The hope and fruit of a Christian's death, *To die is gain.* Learn, That Christ is the believer's life, and death the believer's gain. The life of a real Christian is resolved into Christ, and his death is resolved into gain. Note, 1. Christ is the believer's life; both his life of grace, and his life of glory, is resolved into Christ. As to his life of grace, Christ is the life of this life; he is the efficient or principal cause of this life; he is the exemplar, cause, or pattern, of it; he is the final cause or scope of it; and he is the conserving cause, or preserver and maintainer of it. So for the life of glory, which believers have in reversion, Christ is also the life of that life; thus he has purchased it for them, he has given it to them, he has taken and keeps possession of it in their names, he has prepared it for them, and them for it, and will put them into the full and actual possession of it, in his own time. Note, 2. That death is the believer's gain; death in general, violent as well as natural death; it is not only not injurious, but advantageous: no hurt, but profit; no loss, but benefit; not only to die for Christ, but to die in Christ *is* gain. *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord*, as well as those that die for the Lord. Death appears gain to the believer, if we consider the private evils it frees and delivers him from, namely, from sin, from all temptations to sin, from all inclinations to offend, from all possibility of sinning, from all temporal afflictions, from all sufferings for God, from all sufferings from man for God's sake; especially if we consider the positive good that the believer gains by death, namely, perfection in grace, fulness of joy, the blessed vision, the society of glorified saints and angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. So then, if a state of perfect holiness and purity be better than

a state of corruption and temptation, if a state of rest and peace be better than a state of labour and sorrow, if it be better to be triumphing above, than sighing and groaning below, then *dead saints* are better where they are, than where they were, and death to them is gain, and infinitely advantageous. Note, 3. That the gain which comes by death to the believer, is procured by Christ, namely, by his meritorious satisfaction, by his glorious ascension and possession, by his prevailing intercession; *To live is Christ, to die is gain*:

22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour; yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

But if I live in the flesh, that is, if I shall continue to live longer in this mortal body, *this is the fruit of my labour*; that is, I foresee what will be the blessed fruit of my labour, namely, the conversion and gaining of more souls unto God and Christ; at least, as it is worth my labour, so shall it be my endeavour, to glorify Christ, by my continuance in the world. Learn hence, That as it is the end of a minister's life, so he makes it the end of his living, to glorify Christ, by gaining souls unto him; and in order to the obtaining this great end, he is willing for the present to deny himself the advantage of being with Christ. Observe next, St. Paul's strait which he was now in, which to choose, either life or death, if God should leave it to his choice; *I am in a strait betwixt two*: that is, I am divided in my thoughts and desires, whether to wish for life or death; his ardent love to Christ and himself inclined him to desire a dissolution, *I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ*; but his affectionate regard to his beloved Philippians inclined him to desire a continuation of his time and talents; *nevertheless to abide still in the flesh is more needful for you*. Learn hence, That the life of pious ministers is far more profitable for their people than death. 2. That their death, being a departure unto Christ, is far better, and more desirable to themselves, than life: their life is profitable to civilize some, to convert others, to convince the erroneous, to confirm the weak; the world wants them, the church wants them, their flocks want them, their families want them, and they want them most that think they could spare them best. But their death being a departure, an immedi-

ate departure unto Christ, is far better, and more desirable to themselves, than life. *Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better*: better in point of honour; for as they here laboured in the work of the ministry for him, they shall there sit down upon the throne with him, Rev. iii. 21. Better in point of profit: *he is heir and possessor of all things*, and they shall be joint heirs, and joint possessors with him. Thus may the words be considered, with relation to St. Paul, as a minister of the gospel: but they may be further considered with reference to him as a private Christian; *I desire to depart*. Hence learn, That it is not only warrantable, but highly commendable, for a Christian to be not only fearless but desirous of death. There are, 1. Unwarrantable and sinful desires of death; as when they are rash and hasty, when they are positive and peremptory, when they are directing and prescribing to God, either as to the time, or kind, or manner, of our dissolution, and when our desires are purely selfish, desiring death only as a freedom from present evils, and as a prevention of future sufferings. 2. There are warrantable and justifiable desires of death and dissolution; namely, when we desire it, to free us from the indwelling presence of sin, to put us into a state of perfect holiness, to bring us to the sight of Christ, to give us the possession of that happiness, which was contrived by infinite wisdom, purchased by infinite merit, prepared by infinite power, and bestowed by infinite love. 3. There are also commendable desires, or, the last-mentioned desires are highly commendable: they commend our faith, and proclaim our certain belief of a future state; they commend our love to God, to Christ; they commend our obedience, &c. Learn, 2. That the souls of believers, at their departure from the body, are with Christ. *Quest*. What is it to be with Christ? *Ans*. It implies intuition; we shall see him, and see him as he is, not as once he was in a state of abasement: it implies fruition; we shall enjoy him, as well as see him, and enjoy him to satisfaction, Psal. xviii. ult. and it implies duration: we shall for ever be with the Lord. *Quest*. But how doth it appear that the souls of good men, upon their departure from the body, are with Christ? *Ans*. Thus: they are immediately capable of his presence and enjoyment upon their departure, and they are fully prepared for it. If we be not fit for heaven when we die, we shall never be fit; all is done upon us that was ever intended to be done; and neither Christ's ardent desires to have his children with him, nor the vehement longings of

their souls for the fruition and enjoyment of him, can or shall be delayed; such delays would make their hearts sick: no, they expect satisfaction, and God will not disappoint their expectation.

25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith; 26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

St. Paul having in the foregoing verses told the Philippians how needful it was for him to abide in the flesh, with respect to them, he here gives them a sort of confident assurance (which was given him by immediate revelation) that his life should at this time be preserved for the benefit of the church, and be set at liberty; and that he should come and spend a part of his time amongst them for the furtherance of their faith, and the increase of their joy, that so they might have more abundant matter of rejoicing in Christ, having received a new proof of his power and goodwill towards them, in delivering him their apostles from death, and sending him to them again. Learn hence, 1. That God always can, and sometimes will, so calm the rage of persecutors, that they cannot execute the evil by them intended and resolved against his faithful ministers and servants. Notwithstanding Nero's cruelty, St. Paul had a confident persuasion that he should come out of prison and once more visit the churches. Learn, 2. That Almighty God in great mercy to his church, doth sometimes prolong the lives of his faithful ministers, and most useful servants, and keep them longer out of heaven, that his people may reap the greater advantage by their labours here on earth. Learn, 3. that the more unexpectedly the life of a laborious minister, or a pious and extraordinary Christian, is given him by God, the more abundant ought the church to be in their expressions of joy and thanksgiving to God for such an invaluable blessing: *That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you.*

27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of

perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

Observe here, 1. The general charge given by the apostle to his beloved Philippians, their lives should answer their light, and their practices correspond with their profession: *Let your conversation be such as it becometh the gospel.* A gospel profession requires and calls for a gospel conversation: as the gospel is a gospel of truth and faithfulness, of sincerity and plainness, so our conversation should be sincere and upright, without deceit or fraud; as the gospel is a gospel of peace, so a Christian conversation is a quiet, calm, and peaceable conversation: Christians should be men of peace, peace-makers, peace preservers, lovers of peace, and lives in peace. The gospel is a gospel of love and mercy, of grace and goodness; the badge and cognizance of Christ's disciples, the mark and brand of Christ's sheep, is love unfeigned: thus a gospel conversation is an amicable, loving, and charitable conversation. Again, the gospel of Christ is a gospel of meekness and humility, and its chief lesson is humility: *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Matt. xi. 29. and, *Be ye clothed with humility*, 1 Pet. v. 5. In a word, the gospel of Christ is a gospel of holiness and purity; a Christian conversation must be a pure, and holy, and spotless conversation. Saints by profession should be saints indeed; and there is a comeliness in a gospel-conversation, both as to the inward and outward man. *Walk as becometh the gospel of Christ*; that is answerable to the precepts and commands of the gospel, answerable to the promises and encouragements of the gospel, answerable to the helps and supplies of grace which the gospel affords, answerable to that grand pattern of holiness which the gospel sets before us, and answerable to that high and glorious hope which the gospel raises us up to the joyful expectation of; this is to walk as becometh the gospel of Christ. Observe, 2. The apostle having given a general injunction to walk as becometh the gospel of Christ, next gives a particular injunction for concord and unity amongst themselves: *That ye stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind.* Learn hence, that all those who would walk worthy of the gospel, should endeavour after a close, holy, and lasting union amongst themselves. We can never expect to thrive in grace, if we do not live in peace; let us prize unity and peace as the beauty and strength of the body, and let us pursue peace and union with the utmost strength of our soul. Observe, 3. Another duty exhorted to, and

that is, an united contention: *Striving together for the faith of the gospel.* Before he exhorted them to an holy union; now, to an united contention: unite, but strive; yet let your striving be in communion, not in contention; strive together in all holy and united endeavours to comfort and confirm one another in the faith of the gospel. Observe, 4. He exhorts them as to an holy union, and an united contention, so to an humble boldness: *In nothing terrified by your adversaries;* in nothing, that is, terrified at nothing they can do, and terrified in no degree at any thing they shall do. Be not afraid to be holy; for your adversaries can never hurt you, if they do not hinder you in your duty; the less they fear God, the less you need to fear them. Observe, 5. A double argument to persuade them to the foregoing duty: *In nothing terrified by their adversaries.* 1. This will be to them an evident token of perdition: that is, an united, humble, peaceable boldness, in your holy course, whereby you walk in the spirit and power of the gospel, without fright or fear, will be to your persecutors an evident token of perdition. Persecution is a black mark of a son of perdition, and a very evident token to a man's own conscience that he is in the way of destruction. 2. But to you of salvation: that is, such as suffer patiently, yet resolutely, for the gospel are in the way of salvation; and their sufferings shall promote their eternal salvation: it is added,—*Salvation, and that of God:* now this implies two things; 1. That the salvation of suffering christians shall be sure, they shall certainly be saved, for God has undertaken for it. Now, if it be God that saves, Who shall destroy? Satan will say, "Serve me, and I will save you;" but he is feeble and cannot; false, and will not save. The world will say, "Cast in your lot among us, and we will save you harmless;" but there is no more trust to be given to the children than to the father of lies. But if the God of truth and power says, "I will save;" who will say nay? 2. That their salvation shall be great, as well as sure: he will save them with a mighty salvation, from their mighty sufferings and mighty fears. Suffer for Christ, and then fear none of those things which you shall suffer.

29 For unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

These words come in by the way of encouragement to the practice of the fore-mentioned duty, namely, of courageous suffering for the gospel of Christ; he tells

them, that as ability to believe on Christ, so likewise power to suffer for Christ, were both the gift of God, and as such purchased by Christ for them, and freely bestowed upon them. Learn hence, 1. That it is the duty of all the disciples and followers of Jesus, not only to believe in him, but cheerfully to suffer for him, when he calls them to it;—*not only to believe, but to suffer.* Learn, 2. That suffering for Christ is the gift of God, as well as faith in Christ: *Unto you it is given, not only to believe but to suffer.* Afflictions are the donatives of the gospel; suffering for Christ is the gift of Christ. 1. Ability to suffer is his gift; it is the purchase of his merits, it is the fruit of his mediation. Preparation for suffering, and patience under suffering, are the gift of Christ. 2. As abilities for suffering, so the comforts of suffering, are the gift of Christ; through him it is that his saints glory in tribulation, and their trials are not only tolerable, but joyous. In short, to suffer for Christ, is, 1. A free gift; and, 2. An honourable gift; and, 3. A special and peculiar gift; it is a gift peculiar to saints; yea, peculiar only to some saints. It is only peculiar to saints; the angels glorify Christ by doing, but not by suffering. I doubt not, but had the angels bodies of flesh, as saints have, they would be glad to lay their necks on the block for Christ, as saints do. But this is the peculiar privilege of believers; *unto you it is given, and not to them.* And although a suffering disposition, a readiness and preparation of mind to glorify Christ by suffering, is given to all believers; yet the honour of actually suffering death for Christ is given but to a few. Learn, 3. That faith in Christ must go before suffering for Christ; it must first be given to us to believe on him, before we can suffer for his sake; then only are sufferings truly Christian, and an evidence of salvation, when the sufferer is first a believer: without the shield of faith, we can no more resist the fury of the persecutors, than we can repel the fiery darts of the destroyer; *Unto you it is given, on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but, &c.*

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Here is the last argument made use of by the apostle to encourage them unto patient suffering for the gospel of Christ, as it would render them conformable to Christ their head, so to him their apostle, who suffered many hard things when he was at Philippi, as they had seen, and stood ready to suffer, not only bonds, but death itself.

now he was at Rome, which they heard of: *Having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.* Here observe, 1. The title given by St. Paul to his sufferings for the gospel; he calls them a conflict. Learn, That Christian courage under sufferings cannot be kept up without a mighty conflict; we must conflict with our enemies, with the rage of persecutors; we must conflict with ourselves, and with our own spirits, to keep them from fainting under persecution; and we must even conflict with God himself, wrestle with him, by prayers, for extraordinary measures of strength to support us under sufferings, and to enable us to glorify God in and by them: well might the apostle then call his sufferings a conflict. Observe, 2. St. Paul encourages the Philippians to conflict with sufferings, from his own example before them: *Having the same conflict which you saw in me.* Learn, That the prudent and patient sufferings of the ministers of Christ for the truth of the gospel are, and ought to be, a powerful encouragement to all their people to conflict with the like difficulties and trials for the testimony of Christ: the Captain goes first, leads the van, his ministers follow, and their people bring up the rear; and, having suffered together, they shall also be glorified together; a suffering head, and suffering members, shall never be separated.

CHAP. II.

Our apostle, in the commanding part of the foregoing chapter, recommended to the Philippians' care and practice the duty and constancy in the faith of the gospel, and of Christian unity amongst themselves, the professors of the gospel; but he could not satisfy himself with a simple and naked proposing of this duty, but in this chapter he urges and enforces it with a most elegant and prevalent ostentation, charging and adjuring them, as it were, by all that is dear and precious to them, and as they had any regard unto, or value for, the most glorious privileges of Christianity, to be like-minded, to be found in the exercise and practice of unity and humility; and accordingly he begins this chapter with a most pathetic insinuation, which has also the force of a most rational argumentation; saying, in the first verse, unto them,

I*f there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

Here we have observable, 1. The important duty which the apostle exhorts the Philippians to; and that is, love and unity, unity in judgment and opinion, unity in heart and affection, unity in design and

endeavours; so necessary and advantageous is the duty of unity and concord among all the professors of Christianity, that all the cautions and warnings, all the advice and counsel, all the melting entreaties and passionate importunities of the ministers of Christ, are little enough to excite persons to it, and direct them in the practice of it. Observe, 2. What an heap of arguments the apostle makes use of to excite and quicken the Philippians to the love and practice of this duty: *If there be any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, any bowels and mercies.* As if he had said, If ever you have tasted, by means of my ministry, any sweetness and consolation in Christ and his holy religion, if ever you have found any comfort in his love, if ever you have enjoyed any communion with his Spirit, if ye be men, and have any bowels of mercy for yourselves, if ye be Christians, and have any pity for me in my bonds, *fulfil ye my joy in this, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind.* O! the tenderness, the gentleness, and meekness of soul which was in St. Paul, and ought to be in every spiritual pastor towards his people, to win them, and prevail upon them to love the truth and peace. *Fulfil ye my joy,* says the apostle; as if he had said, Sufferings I have enough already; O! do not you, by your divisions and dissensions, add more: I am already a prisoner, expecting the sentence of death, preparing for the sword of persecution, but none of these things move me; I can rejoice in a dungeon, sing in the stocks, triumph in death, if I can but hear you stand fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel. But, if I hear that you are broken by divisions, my heart is broke; the news of differences and dissensions among you will be heavier to me than my chain, darker than my dungeon, sharper than Nero's sword. Do not thus add to my sorrow and sufferings; but as you have begun and occasioned joy in me, I beseech you fulfil and complete my joy, by your being of one heart, of one mind, entirely one.

3 *Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory;—*

Here our apostle dissuadeth the Philippians from a double vice, destructive to unity, namely, contention and vain-glory, which are the very bane of unity and unanimity: let nothing be done amongst you through emulation and envy, through contention and vain-glory. Pride and ambition are usually attended with strife and contention: a vain-glorious person over-

rates himself, undervalues others, and breaks the peace with all.

—But in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Here our apostle directs to humility, in order to peace and unity; which humility he styles *lowliness of mind*, a grace whereby a man thinks meanly of himself, and highly of others, having a better opinion of others' wisdom and piety than his own; now this a man may do, and not sin, though he be mistaken; the publican judged the Pharisee better than himself; and though it was not so, God did not disapprove him for it, but he went away justified. It is no crime to judge another better than ourselves, though he be not so; but it is pride to judge another worse than ourselves, though he be really so. Learn hence, That true humility doth not consist in lowliness of expression, but in lowliness of mind and opinion: not the man that speaks meanly of himself, but he that thinks so, is the humble man. Learn, 2. That the humble and lowly-minded man is so conscious to himself of his own infirmities, so modest in the estimating of his graces and virtues, and so forward to hope and believe the best of others, that not only in outward expression, but in real estimation, doth he give others a preference before himself: *In lowliness of mind, let each man esteem others better than themselves.*

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

The apostle here dissuadeth from another sin, which is very destructive of unity and peace, of concord and love; and that is, the sin of inordinate self-love, whereby we regard only our own honour and profit, wholly neglecting the concerns of others. *Look not every man on his own things*; that is, his own private advantage only or chiefly, but take care of the things which tend to the advantage of others. Not but that a Christian may and ought to look at his own things, but not wholly: our regard must extend further than ourselves, and our own things; we must look on the things of others also; we must be as just and true to another's reputation as to our own, and regard both the honour and profit of our neighbour as well as our own: and where Christians are of this public spirit and temper, it contributes much, very much, towards the preserving

and maintaining of unity and peace among them.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus;

That is, this humble mind. Here the apostle presses the duty of humility, from Christ's example; he was a perfect pattern of humility when here on earth: example therefore should recommend this grace and virtue to us, which was so orient in the life of Christ, whose humility was as conspicuous as his innocency; and accordingly the apostle descends in the next verse to give particular instances of the humility and humiliation of the Son of God.

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Behold here the greatest example of humility, of lowliness and abasement, that ever the world was acquainted with: the mighty God became less than man! To make a due estimate hereof we must first observe, What Christ was before his incarnation and humiliation, namely, the great and mighty God: for, says the apostle, he was in the *form of God*, and *equal with God*; that is, being the substantial form, and essential image of the Father, enjoying the divine nature, with all its glory, and all the ensigns of majesty which God himself had eternally and invariably. As to be in the form of a servant, signifies that he was a servant; so to be in the form of God, signifies that he was God. And observe, 2. He was in the form of God, before he was in the form of a servant: *And, being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God.* Now if he thought it no robbery, it could be no robbery; and if no robbery, he must be equal; and if equal, he must be God by nature, as the Father is. Learn hence, That our Saviour possessed that glory which is truly divine, before he assumed our nature as man: he had a peerage or equality with his Father in glory; the angels adored him in heaven before his incarnation on earth, *Isa. vi. 1. 2.* Observe, 3. What mighty abasement the holy Jesus, God blessed for evermore, underwent, when he humbled himself: *He was found in fashion as a man; he took upon him the form of a ser-*

went, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Behold here the Son of righteousness under an (almost total) eclipse; he that was eternally beautiful and glorious, being the brightness of his Father's glory, was so veiled, clouded, and debased, in the day of his humiliation, that he appears not like a God, scarce like a man. Note, 1. *He took upon him the form of a servant*: now this was a lower degree of condescension than the assuming the naked human nature; for a servant is not simply a man, but a mean man, a man in a low estate. Lord! what abasement was here, that Christ, who was in the form of God, should degrade himself into the form of a servant, and take the human nature without honour, after it had lost its primitive innocency, after sin had blotted the original glory of it, and withered the beauty and excellency thereof! O inconceivable condescension! Note, 2. *He emptied himself, or made himself of no reputation*; that is, in the day of his incarnation he laid aside the robes of his glory, he emptied himself of that divine splendour and majesty which before he had; not by ceasing to be what he was, but by assuming something to himself which before he was not: the Son of God descended from his throne, and put on our vile mortality; he parted with his glory, that he might part with his life for our salvation. Note, 3. *He was made in the likeness of man, and found in fashion as a man*; that is, he was truly and really man, made in the likeness of other men, without any visible outward difference: *He was in all things like unto us, sin only excepted*, Rom. viii. 3. He is said to *appear in the likeness of sinful flesh*, that is, in flesh that had the marks and miserable effects of sin upon it: not that Christ assumed sinful flesh, or flesh really defiled by sin, but he assumed the human nature: attended with a whole troop of human infirmities, which sin first let into that nature, as hunger and thirst, weariness and pain, mortality and death. By reason of which, though he was not a sinner, yet he looked like one, and they that conversed with him took him for one, seeing all these effects of sin upon him. Lord, what a stoop was this! To be made in the likeness of innocent flesh had been much; but to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh, rebellious flesh, flesh, though not defiled, yet miserably defaced by sin! O, what is this! and who can declare his humiliation! Note, 4. The nature of this humiliation: *he humbled himself*; the word imports both a real and a voluntary abasement. *Real*: Christ did not personate an humble man, nor act the part of one in a

debased state, but was really and in very deed humbled, both in the sight of God and man: and, as it was real, so also was his humiliation voluntary. It is not said he was humbled, but that *he humbled himself*; he was willing to stoop to this low and abject state for us; and it was the voluntariness of his humiliation that made it so acceptable to God, and so beneficial and serviceable unto us. Note, 5. The degrees of our holy Lord's humiliation: *he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*. Here we have the depth of Christ's humiliation specified; it was *unto death*, and also aggravated, *even unto the death of the cross*; he humbled himself, not only to become a mortal man, but a dead corpse; and that too hanging on a tree, dying the death of a malefactor. There was pain, shame, and a curse, in the death of the cross: Christ underwent the pain patiently, the shame meekly, the curse obediently, all of them willingly and cheerfully, that the justice of God might be satisfied, his wrath pacified, his majesty reconciled, death and hell vanquished and destroyed. Behold the transcendency of Christ's love to the children of men! *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend*; but greater love had the Son of God than this, that he laid down his life for his inveterate enemies: *he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The former verse spake of the depth of Christ's humiliation; these, of the height of his exaltation. Where observe, 1. The dignity itself conferred by God upon Christ; God *exalted* him, highly exalted him, exalted him above all exaltation, as the word signifies. Christ in his resurrection was exalted; in his ascension, he was highly exalted; in his sitting at God's right hand, he was very highly exalted above all exaltation. Observe, 2. How the steps of Christ's exaltation did punctually answer the steps of his humiliation; the first step of his humiliation was his incarnation, by which he was made man, and, as our surety, was made sin. The first step of his exaltation was his resurrection, by which he was declared to be the *Son of God with*

power; and, as our surety, having paid our debt was released from the prison of the grave. The second step of his humiliation, was his poor and contemptible life, and his painful, shameful, and accursed death; answerable thereunto is Christ's ascension into heaven, and sitting there at God's right hand, advancing him above all principalities and power, that is, above all the angels, and placing him next himself in dignity and honour. Observe, 3. The connection between Christ's humiliation and exaltation: *he humbled himself, and became obedient to the death; wherefore God hath highly exalted him.* Where note, That some make the humiliation of Christ the meritorious cause of his exaltation; and his exaltation the reward of his humiliation: others make the humiliation of Christ only the antecedent of his exaltation; he humbled himself, and God has exalted him to a dignity above all dignities and pre-eminence whatsoever, making him King and Head of his church, and giving him all power both in heaven and earth, requiring that the divine honour due to God should be given to him also. Observe, 4. The particulars of our Lord's exaltation declared: and they are three. 1. *God hath given him a name above every name:* that is, dignity and power, majesty and authority, over all creatures both in heaven and earth. 2. *That every knee, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, should bow to the name of Jesus: every knee, that is, every creature in heaven, earth, and hell, shall bow,* that is, yield subjection to Christ, some voluntarily, others unwillingly; the good angels and good men paying a cheerful homage, the evil angels and bad men yielding a forced and constrained subjection to him. 3. *That every tongue must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord;* every tongue, that is, every person, men of all nations and languages, shall confess Christ crucified to be the Lord and Judge of the world, acknowledging his royal sovereignty and dominion. Observe, 5. The end of Christ's glorious exaltation; it was, *to the glory of God the Father:* that is, it pleased God the Father, for his own glory, that the Lord Jesus Christ, after he had been deeply humbled, should be highly exalted. Observe, lastly, the apostle's great design and scope in setting before the Philippians the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ: and that was to excite them to the grace and duty of humility, that the same humble mind should be in them which was also in Christ Jesus. As if he had said our Lord Jesus Christ humbled himself greatly for us, and afterwards was highly exalted by

God above us; so in proportion may you expect to be exalted by God, if you humble yourselves, in order to maintain and preserve the church's peace and unity; for before honour is humility.

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Observe here, 1. The commendation given by St. Paul of his beloved Philippians, for their cheerful obedience to the precepts of the gospel: *they always obeyed,* that is, ever since their first conversion to christianity, not only while the apostle was upon the spot with them, but since the providence of God necessitated his absence from them; not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence. But how came it to pass that their obedience was greater, when they wanted the apostle for their instructor? *Ans.* In the absence of one teacher they had another, and him a better than the inspired apostle, even the inspiring Spirit of God, who in the apostle's absence was more immediately present with them by his inward motions, to excite and enable them both to will and to do what is well pleasing to him. O! how good is God at the supplying the wants, and making up the losses of his people! If persecution drives his church's ministers into dungeons, and they cannot hear a voice behind them, they shall have the presence of his Holy Spirit, and hear a voice within them, saying, *This is the way, walk ye in it.* Observe, 2. A special duty which St. Paul exhorts the Philippians to be found in the practice of, namely, *to work out their salvation with fear and trembling:* implying, that it should be every christian's great work to be daily working out his own salvation, that is, diligently making use of all means and faithfulness, practising all duties in order thereunto. Note here, 1. The excellency of the object proposed; and that is, salvation: there is salvation held forth and tendered by God to lost sinners, in the gospel. Note, 2. The difficulty of salvation, supposed and implied in the word *work;* which signifies an exerting our utmost endeavours, in order to the attaining of it. The work of salvation is no lazy man's business, but a work of labour and difficulty, though the difficulties may be over-

come by an industrious diligence. Note, 3. The necessity of perseverance, in order to our attaining of salvation: *Work out your salvation*, that is, perfect and consummate the work which you have happily begun. Note, 4. The manner how we should work out our own salvation: namely, *with fear and trembling*; intimating, that an holy fear of God, and an humble fear of ourselves, will be of singular use and advantage to us in the working out of our salvation. Observe, 3. The argument or motive to excite unto this labour and diligence in and about the work of salvation; and this is very encouraging, because God works with us, and in us, ver. 13. *For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.* That God works with us, is great encouragement to us to work; but we must remember God works arbitrarily, and not necessarily; he worketh but of his own good pleasure, as a free agent, who can cease when he pleases. Therefore work with fear and trembling. Learn from the whole, 1. That we can do nothing without God. 2. That he will do nothing without us: we can do nothing without his assistance, he will do nothing without the concurrence of our endeavours: he worketh in us both *to will and to do*, and we must work with him, in order to the working out of our salvation.

14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings; 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

Here our apostle seems to resume the exhortation which he began to press before, namely, to love and concord, to unity and peace, among themselves; he exhorts them, as to do all things without contention, so without *murmurings*, and *hot disputings*, in which usually the laws of charity are violated, and the peace of the church, and quietness among christians, interrupted. And, to provoke them thereto, he discovers to them the many great and blessed advantages which would redound unto them by their unity and concord. 1. Hereby they should be *blameless and harmless*, the sons of God, *without rebuke*, that is, very inoffensive persons, or, as the Greek word renders it, that ye may be the spotless sons of God; not absolutely spot-

less, pure, and perfect, but without such spots as are inconsistent with your sonship: there is a spot which is, and a spot which is not, the spot of God's children, *Deut. xxxii.* 4. Sins of infirmity are spots found upon the best of his children: sins of presumption, if at any time found upon you, they are not the spots of his children. 2. Hereby they should shine as lights in the world, that is, in the Pagan world, and in the christian church. This imports both the high dignity and special duty of christians, to do as so many suns, to arise and shine like mighty luminaries in the firmament of the world, casting out their rays and beams in a holy and heavenly conversation. 3. Hereby they would hold forth the word of life; not only hold it fast for their own comfort, but hold it forth for others' benefit, that is, in their christian practice and profession; the lives of christians should publish the word of life, to the intent that the enemies of it may fall in love with it. Perhaps as many as have been converted to christianity, by holding forth the word of life in practice, as by holding it forth from the pulpit; an holy life is the loudest proclamation, and the best way of holding forth the word of life. 4. Hereby he should have joy and rejoicing, as well as they reap benefit and advantage: *That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain*; that is, that I have not preached the gospel unprofitably amongst you. Here note, That the work of the ministry is a laborious work, a spending work; the apostle here sets it forth by running a race, which is a wasting and strength-consuming exercise; *I have run, I have laboured.* Note 2. That the labour and pains of the most faithful and indefatigable ministers of Christ may be, and too often are, lost upon, and in vain unto, the people that are constantly made partakers of them; they may run in vain, and labour in vain, as to their people, but blessed be God, it shall not be in vain as to themselves, *Isa. xlix.* 5. *Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall they be glorious.* Note, 3. That the glory which shall be upon our people in the day of Judgment, who were converted to God by our ministerial endeavours, will add to our joy as ministers, and be our crown of rejoicing in that day: *That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain.*

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. 18 For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me.

' Behold here how St. Paul, the under-shepherd, imitates Christ, that great and good Shepherd, in his readiness to lay down his life for the sheep; not for their reconciliation, but for their confirmation: *If, says he, it shall please God that I be, by martyrdom, offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith; that is, to establish you in the faith which I have taught you, and to confirm and seal the truth of it with my blood, I will rejoice therein for your sakes; and I desire you to rejoice with me, and to bless God for me in so doing.* Note here, The emphasis and elegance of the apostle's words, *If I be offered up*: a manifest allusion to the Jewish sacrifices, in which there was wine poured out as a libation upon the sacrifice, and then offered up to God. Thus, says he, if my blood, like wine, be poured forth, whilst I am employed by the preaching of the gospel to render you Gentiles an acceptable sacrifice, and a sweet-smelling savour unto God, I should rejoice even thus to die in your service, and for the confirmation of your faith. Hence learn, That life itself is not, and will not be thought too dear, or accounted by the ministers of Christ too much, to lay down in the service of their people's souls, and for the confirmation of their faith: *If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice.* Learn, 2. That the ministers of Christ should not preach any thing to their people, but what they dare seal and confirm the truth of, with their very blood, if God calls them thereunto. St. Paul had before preached the doctrine of the gospel to the Philippians, and now he stood ready to seal it with his blood.

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. 20 For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. 22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. 23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

Our apostle, having finished the first part of this chapter, which contained exhortations to duty, comes now to the second part of it, containing arguments of comfort; and here, first he comforts the Philippians, by promising to send Timothy unto them shortly. Observe here, 1. The greatness of St. Paul's soul, widened with

desires to advance the kingdom of Jesus Christ: his pious zeal put him upon contriving some way of making a supply of his necessitated absence from the Philippians; what he could not do by himself, he desires and endeavours to do by another, even Timothy; him he promises to send as a living epistle, to instruct and exhort, to quicken and comfort, the church at Philippi, in his constrained absence from her. "Blessed apostle; so that Christ might be advanced, thou caredst not by whom it were, whether by thyself or by another; thou wert willing to stand in the crowd, and be hidden, so that Christ might stand upon another's shoulders, and be seen!" *I trust in the Lord to send Timotheus unto you shortly.* Observe, 2. St. Paul, being about to send Timothy to Philippi, sends first a commendation of him; and that which he particularly commends Timothy for, was, his affectionate love unto the Philippians, and his tender care and concern for them: *I have no man like-minded, who will care for your state.* Now this care in Timothy, for and towards the Philippians, is here commended by St. Paul in several observable instances of it. 1. It was a spiritual care chiefly, he careth for your state, that is, for your spiritual state: not that he was without concern for their temporal happiness, but the prosperity of their souls was the prime object of his care. 2. It was a solicitous care; the Greek word signifies an anxious care, a soul-cutting, a soul-rending care; his care was not to cut and wound the souls, to vex and grieve the spirits of his people, but he cuts his own soul with caring for his people. 3. It was a sincere care, a natural, genuine care, he naturally careth for your state; naturally, that is, heartily, sincerely, not artificially, and in appearance only. Some can artificially act the part of a zealot, when their own interest or applause makes it necessary; but Timothy was unskilful in such arts, he did naturally, cheerfully, and constantly, care for their state; there was a reality, yea, a larger quantity of love and natural affection towards the Philippians found with him. 4. St. Paul commends this care in Timothy towards them, for the rarity of it: *I find none like-minded,* that is, few, very few, like-minded with him, and equal-hearted to him in the cause of Christ: St. Paul had divers ministers now with him, but one Timothy; others sought their own things, but he the things of Jesus Christ: yet I conceive this is not to be understood universally, but synecdochically; not as if all ministers, except Timothy only, sought themselves and regarded their own private interest, but the

most and far greatest part did so, refusing to undertake such a tedious journey from Rome to Philippi, as Timothy stood ready to undertake. Learn hence, That it is a great sin in all, but especially in the ministers of Jesus Christ, to be of a self-seeking spirit. Observe, 3. He commends this care of Timothy's towards them, by their experimental knowledge of it, and acquaintance with it; for, when old Paul was at Philippi, young Timothy was an assistant to him, as a son to a Father, obeying his counsel, following his directions, imitating his example, in all things tending to the edification of the church. Now from the whole, this is, from St. Paul's care to send Timothy, thus qualified, to labour in the gospel, at the church at Philippi, we note, That such as have power to send forth ministers to flocks, and pastors to take care of the souls of a people, should send such as are both able and willing to spend and be spent for the good of souls, and, if it may be, such as are well known unto, and approved of by the flock, for their zeal and diligence in the work of Christ. St. Paul is a pattern here for all patrons, laying before them the qualifications of the persons whom they should recommend to the care of souls, such as, with Timothy, have a compassion for souls, a truly solicitous care and concern for the happiness and welfare of souls, such as the people have had some knowledge of, or at least a liberty to inquire after; the man of good ministerial abilities, not of great Simoniacal gifts: for if patrons, in the execution of that vast trust (but little considered) do seek only their own things, no wonder that their clerks seek not the things of Jesus Christ.

24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly. 25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. 26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. 27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

Our apostle having in the foregoing verses declared his resolution to send Timothy to the Philippians as soon as he should see how it would go with himself

at Rome, and what would be the issue of his bonds; and having also discovered his own purpose to come himself to them, as soon as the providence of God should set him at liberty; in the mean time, he assures them, he would no longer detain their own special minister Epaphroditus from them, whom they had so kindly sent with a liberal supply unto him, in the prison at Rome: *I supposed it necessary to send unto you Epaphroditus, my brother, my companion in labour, my fellow-soldier, your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.* Here note, 1. How copious St. Paul is in the commendation of Epaphroditus: he calls him his brother, his brother in Christ, his brother in the ministry, his companion in labour, his fellow-labourer in Christ's vineyard, travelling from one part of it to another, to plant and propagate the gospel of Christ; his *fellow-soldier* also, a faithful and constant associate with him in the Christian warfare: their apostle or messenger, the bishop of Philippi, say the ancient fathers; their messenger to carry the church's alms to St. Paul, say others. Behold here, in St. Paul's sending away Epaphroditus loaded thus with commendation, the great modesty, sincerity, and humility, of this chief apostle. St. Paul had many prerogatives above Epaphroditus; he was immediately called by Christ extraordinarily fitted and furnished for his calling; he laboured and suffered more abundantly than all the rest; yet he almost equalizes and levels Epaphroditus with himself, calling him *brother, fellow-labourer, fellow-soldier*, and highly magnifies the gifts and graces of God's Spirit in him, without the least diminution: teaching such as are dignified in the church, and exalted by their merits above others, not to despise the persons, nor to extenuate and lessen the gifts, and graces, and usefulness, of their inferior brethren. Pride in any person is odious, but in a minister it is monstrous; they that have received more than others, and know better than others, ought to be patterns of humility unto others. Note, 2. The reasons here assigned, why St. Paul judged it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to his charge at Philippi. 1. He longed after his flock, ver. 26. *He longed after you all*, even unto heaviness: we do not read of his longing after his family, or his friends, or the fleece, but his flock, his church and charge at Philippi; this lay near his heart, this he longed to be with. 2. This longing and heaviness was mutual: the Philippians longed for him, and were full of heaviness because of his sickness. When the head of a faithful minister of Jesus Christ aches, his people's hearts ache: mutual

longings between ministers and people in case of absence, and mutual heaviness and mourning in case of sickness, is a certain argument and evidence of mutual love one towards another. Note, 2. How our apostle confirms the report of Epaphroditus's sickness, and celebrates the mercy and goodness of God in his unexpected recovery; *indeed he was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him, &c.* Here observe,

1. The eminency of the person who was sick: Epaphroditus, a great man, a good man, a man of God, St. Paul's brother, companion, fellow-soldier, falls sick when engaged in Christ and the church's special service: saints, as well as sinners, ministers as well as people, are subject to sickness, diseases, nay, death itself may meet them in the work of Christ. Observe, 2.

As the eminency of the person, so the extremity of the disease; *he was nigh unto death.* But why did not St. Paul, who had the gift of healing, help Epaphroditus now sick, as well as raise Eutychus when dead? *Acts xx. 9.* *Ans.* The apostles had not the gift of healing to make use of it at their pleasure, but as God was pleased by a special instinct and a strong faith to excite them to it, when it was his pleasure to have them use it: these gifts were given for the sake of unbelievers, to convince them of the truth of christianity, but God did not think fit to have them ordinarily exercised upon believers. Observe, 3.

The recovery of Epaphroditus, and the author of it: *God had mercy on him*; and he who is Lord of life and death, said in mercy to him, "Return and live." When God preserves the lives and restores the health of his faithful ministers, it is an act of no small mercy both to their people and themselves: to their people, as they become the greater instruments of their good; to themselves, as it increases their own reward: the longer a minister lives, the more glory he brings to God; and the more glory he brings to God on earth, the more glory shall he partake of with God in heaven; in short, the longer he lives, the more souls he converts, and every soul is as a new gem added to that crown which shall one day be put upon his head, *Dan. xii. 3.* *They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.* Observe lastly, The share which St. Paul had in the mercy of Epaphroditus' recovery: *God had mercy, not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.* Paul had much sorrow, a great load of sorrow upon him at that time; he was now among strangers, yea, among prisoners, in the midst of persecutors, and his mind oppressed with sorrow, partly for the Philippians, partly for

Epaphroditus; therefore the Lord, in tender pity to him, did not take away by death his dear and useful companion, lest he should have sorrow upon sorrow, and cause his wounds to bleed afresh. Learn hence, So compassionate is God towards his dear children, that though he often causes them grief and sorrow, yet he will not overcharge them therewith, nor add affliction to the afflicted, nor suffer them to be exercised and tried above what they are able: *God had mercy upon me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.*

28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: 30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Here, first, St. Paul assigns the reason why he was so careful to send back Epaphroditus to the Philippians, namely, to assuage his own grief, and to increase their joy, *that when ye see him, ye might rejoice, and I be the less sorrowful.* Next, the apostle exhorts them to receive him with all joy and gladness, and to give him, and all such as he was, due honour, and deserved respect; and doubtless, the Philippians received him with inexpressible joy, as the minister of Christ risen from the dead, recovered from the grave; received to life and service, when all hopes of enjoying him were cut off. O the folly and frailty of human nature! We prize our mercies more by the want, than by the worth of them. Lastly, he assigns a special reason why he would have them receive him with such demonstrations of joy, namely, because it was in their and his service that he was brought to the very brink of the grave; *For the work of Christ, he was nigh unto death:* the work here meant is properly his journey to Rome, which was long and tedious; his watchings and pains-taking with and for the apostle there were very spending, he endeavoured to supply the absence and want of the whole church to St. Paul; his zeal for God, and his affection to St. Paul, carried him out beyond himself, beyond his strength, to the apparent prejudice both of his health and life. Learn hence, 1. That to relieve the members, but especially the Ministers of Christ, in their necessities and wants, is the work of Christ. *For the work of Christ he was nigh unto death.* Ministers are not only engaged in the work

of Christ when they preach, &c. but when they visit their flock, inquire into the wants of the poor, and administer to the necessities of the distressed; this is the work of Christ. Learn, 2. That sickness may overtake, yea, death itself may meet, the faithful servants and ministers of Christ, when they are engaged in his own work: it was in the work of the Lord that Epaphroditus met with sickness; and had he met with death itself, he had been happy; for, *Blessed are they that die in the work of the Lord; they shall rest from their labours, and their works shall follow them.*

CHAP. III.

The design and scope of our apostle, in this chapter, is, to arm the church of the Philippians against those false judaizing teachers, who confounded Christ and Moses, circumcision and the gospel, together; this he doth by several arguments, namely, first, from the disposition, quality, and end, of those false teachers; they are dogs, unclean beasts, that bark only for the belly, and do not only bark, but watch their times to bite too. Our apostle therefore wisely warns the Philippians in the chapter before us, to beware of them, and guard against them.

FINALLY, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.—

There is no duty which believers do more willingly hear, or more difficultly observe, than the duty of spiritually rejoicing: had our apostle called upon the blessed angels to rejoice, who have neither sin, nor sorrow, nor fear, nor sufferings, nor enemies to annoy them, that might have seemed agreeable; but is it at all congruous to persuade sinners loaded with guilt, and defiled with corruption, clothed with infirmities, assaulted with temptations, persecuted by the world! To bid them rejoice, may seem strange: but the wonder will cease, if we consider the object which he directs them to rejoice in, and that is the Lord, not in themselves but in the Lord Jesus Christ: *My brethren rejoice in the Lord.* Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the great, sure, and perpetual joy of his own people; the object of joy is a present good, a precious good, a proportionable good, a perpetual good, such is our Lord Jesus Christ. Learn, 2. That it is the duty of all sincere and serious christians to joy and rejoice in him. *Finally, brethren, rejoice in the Lord,* rejoice in his person, in the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are found in him, which render him an object worthy of evangelical adoration; rejoice in his mediation, in the great things he has done and suffered for you, in the graces of his Spirit conferred upon you, and in the hopes of that glory to which he has entitled you.

—To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

To write the same things, that is, not the same things which I wrote before, but the same things which I preached to you before, and which you often heard by word of mouth from me before: though I inculcate and press the same truths upon you by my writing, which I have done by my preaching, it is neither grievous nor burdensome to me, nor unnecessary or unprofitable for you. Learn hence, That the often repeating and frequent inculcating of such truths as are most useful and necessary for the instruction and edification of the hearers, ought to be esteemed neither burdensome by the minister, nor wearisome by the people. Learn farther, That we have here St. Paul's judgment against oral tradition, which the church of Rome prefers before the written word; so did not St. Paul, knowing that what is delivered by word of mouth might soon slip out of the memory, but what is written is remaining: blessed be God for his written word.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

Observe here, 1. The cautionary directions given the Philippians to beware of false teachers, who adulterated and corrupted the doctrine of Christ, by joining the works and observances of the law with the doctrine of the gospel, in point of justification, making them at least the partial ground of their confidence and rejoicing: beware of such, says our apostle. Observe, 2. The cutting reproof given to these judaizing teachers in that odious character he gives of them, and in that brand of infamy which he claps upon them. 1. He calls them *dogs*; a term not of diminution only, but of the utmost disgrace: *Is thy servant a dog?* 2 Kings viii. 13. supposing that nothing could be thought more vile and base. The Jews called all the Gentiles dogs, because unclean. St. Paul here calls the false teachers dogs filthy, because, as dogs, they did rend and tear the simplicity of the gospel, and divide the glory of man's salvation betwixt faith and works; because, as dogs, they did bark out reproaches against the apostles and their doctrine, delivered in its purity and simplicity; because, as dogs, they did take a great deal of pains to compass abundance of ground to gain their game; or, in our Saviour's words, *They compass sea and land to make proselytes.* 2. *Evil-workers*, because, pretending to labour in the gospel, they did subvert and overthrow the great design of the

gospel; pretending to be fellow-workers with the apostles, but pulling down what they had built up. 3. *The concision*: so in contempt he calls circumcision, which these judaizing teachers pleaded the necessity of; as Hezekiah called the brazen serpent *Nehushtan*: because circumcision, being no longer an ordinance of God, was no better than a cutting off the flesh; and they that made it necessary to justification, cut themselves off from Christ, and from the church of Christ: by urging the necessity of circumcision, they cut and rend asunder the church of God. Note here, 1. How different the temper of this apostle was in different cases; in things of an indifferent nature, and less necessary, who more mild, indulgent, and complying, breathing forth the spirit of the meek Jesus? But when opinions were broached, which tend to pervert souls, and to subvert the gospel, then he speaks fire and thunder, and no terms are bad enough for such seducers. Let us follow St. Paul as he followed Christ, and learn when to be mild and when to be zealous. Note, 2. With what an excess of care he cautions the Philippians against these false teachers, saying, *Beware, beware, beware*, three times together in one short verse; thereby instructing the ministers of Christ, that their utmost zeal and diligence is necessary in warning their people to guard against seducers.

3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh:

That is, we Christians are alone the true and spiritual circumcision, and accounted circumcised by God, because we have that which the outward circumcision signified, namely, the circumcision of the heart, and the mortification of all carnal lusts and desires; we have the substance of that ordinance, which is infinitely more pleasing to God than the ceremony and shadow: though you have the sign, we have the thing signified. But how doth that appear? Three ways; we worship God in the Spirit, we rejoice in Christ Jesus, we have no confidence in the flesh. 1. We worship God in the Spirit; that is, first, We give him the worship of our souls and spirits, and do not put him off with mere bodily worship, or with the old, antiquated Jewish worship. Secondly, We worship God in the Spirit, that is, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit; he excites and quickens to the duty, he assists and enables in the duty, and he encourages and emboldens the soul

to expect audience and acceptance after the duty. Again, 2. We rejoice in Christ Jesus: this was a second evidence of their being the true circumcision. Let them glory in their carnal ordinance of outward circumcision, we will rejoice in Christ Jesus, who hath freed us from the slavery of that ordinance. 3. We have no confidence in the flesh, nor in circumcision, or any fleshly privileges, or carnal prerogatives: we confide only in Christ, and in nothing but Christ. Note, That by *flesh* here is meant particularly the circumcision of the flesh; but more generally by *flesh* may be understood all the externals of religion, which men place their trust and confidence in; all outward privileges and ordinances are flesh, in the apostle's sense here: prayer is flesh, ordinances are flesh, the righteousness of the law is flesh; nay, grace itself, trusted to, and confided in, is flesh. The sincere and serious Christian rejoices in Christ Jesus, confides in him, but dares not place any confidence in the flesh. *We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

As if our apostle had said, "Let no man think that I undervalue the Jewish privileges, because I want them; show me ever a judaizing teacher of them all that can pretend to more, or so many of them, as myself; so that, were this a ground of confidence, I can vie with any one of them in carnal privileges, Jewish prerogatives, and outward performances; yea, I can boast of as much self-righteousness as the best of them, and beyond them all: for I was circumcised, and had the seal of the covenant applied to me, yea, I was circumcised the eighth day, the very day prescribed by the law; the Jews maintaining that circumcision before the eighth day was no circumcision, and after the eighth day was of less value. *Of the stock of Israel*; one of that nation which God set apart for himself, when he rejected all the nations of the earth beside. *Of the tribe of Benjamin*; of a noble tribe, as well as descended

of an honourable people; a tribe which kept close to God, when other tribes revolted to the worship of Jeroboam's calves; a tribe honoured with the first of Israel's kings, king Saul. *An Hebrew of the Hebrews*; that is, born a Jew both by father's side and mother's side. *As touching the law, a Pharisee*; that is, as touching the interpretation and observation of the law, a Pharisee, or one of the strictest sects among the Jews for the profession of religion. *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church*; that is, as touching zeal for the Jewish religion, I have showed that above others, in my fury and furious persecution of the church of Christ; I was active, according as my judgment and conscience directed me. *And as touching the righteousness which was in me and by the law*, (that is, as to my personal obedience unto the law,) I was blameless, without spot, as the original word signifies; that is, in my own account, and in man's esteem, my conversation not stained with any gross sin, but very exact in my deportment and behaviour, living up to my knowledge, my practice corresponding with my profession." Behold here a man that had a large stock of Jewish privileges and prerogatives; all these grounds of confidence the apostle had before his conversion; and he might have rested there, and have gloried and confided therein, as well as the judaizing doctors did, who gloried in their external privileges; but how far St. Paul was from this spirit and temper, the next verses inform us.

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.
8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

That is, the fore-mentioned privileges, which heretofore he accounted gain, and thought to gain justification and salvation by, now, since his illumination, he counted them all loss: he saw he had lost his soul for ever, had he trusted to these; but Christ being made known to him as the only way to gain pardon of sin, and acceptance with God, he renounces all his former privileges, his former legal righteousness, he durst not lean upon these broken reeds, he would have no more confidence in the flesh, but in Christ only: *What things were reputed gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ's sake*. And he repeats the words over again with confidence and assurance,

that he might not be thought to speak unadvisedly, and in a heat; *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss*. He did not only count them but loss, but he had actually renounced them as such; an allusion to a merchant, who is content to suffer the loss of all his goods to save his life. But how did St. Paul suffer the loss of them? *Ans*. He did not make shipwreck of holy duties, and cast off the performance of them, but he cast off all dependence upon them, and cast away all expectation of happiness and salvation from them, which he had before. Observe farther, He did not only count them loss, but cast them away as dung, as filthy carrion, as garbage cast to dogs, as the word signifies. Such things as these the false teachers (whom he called dogs) might delight in; but as for himself, he could relish and savour nothing in them, in comparison of Jesus Christ. In these words, observe, 1. The low esteem and mean account which St. Paul had, and every enlightened Christian has, of the greatest advantages which this world doth or can afford: *In comparison of Jesus Christ, and him crucified, I count all things but loss*; all my spiritual privileges, with all my worldly advantages, I do, upon the greatest deliberation and thought, undervalue them all for the sake of Christ and his grace. Observe, 2. The high and honourable esteem which he had of the knowledge of Jesus Christ; he declares there was a transcendent excellency in it: *For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*. The knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the way and method of salvation by and through him, is an excellent knowledge: every thing of Jesus Christ is excellent and worthy to be known; the dignity of his person, as God, as Man, as God-man, or Mediator between God and man; the dignity of his offices, as the great King, Priest, and Prophet of his church; the eminency of his example, the depth of his humiliation, the height of his exaltation, the transcendency of his love in all his undertakings for us, and the way and method of his justification of us by faith in his blood. We may conclude of the act by the object; Christ is the most excellent object, therefore the knowledge of Christ is and must be the most excellent knowledge; not only all the excellences of the creatures are found in him in the most excellent manner, but all the excellences of the Godhead, the fulness of the Godhead, dwell in him bodily, that is, personally and substantially. Observe, 3. The effect which this knowledge of Christ had upon our apostle: it enabled him *to suffer the loss of all things*. Those that have at-

tained the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, will not think much to suffer the loss of any thing; yea, of all things, for the obtaining of him, and salvation by him. Observe, 4. The end and design of St. Paul, in parting with all for Christ, or the motive and encouragement which induced him thereunto, namely, that he *might win Christ*; that is, that he might obtain an interest in him, and the blessings purchased by him; for this was he willing to part with all his privileges, all his accomplishments, all his enjoyments, all his own righteousness, his exactness in the outward observation of the law; he renounced all, not in point of performance, but in point of dependence; he renounced all confidence in it for his justification before God: *Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss.*

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Observe here, 1. The subject matter of St. Paul's desire was to be found in *Christ*. Beza, upon the place, brings in the justice of God pursuing Paul as a malefactor; and *Christ*, as a city of refuge which he desires to flee into and be found in. By being found in *Christ*, then, understand ingrafting and incorporating into him by faith; to find acceptance with God, through him, as our surety and representative, and to persevere in our obedience to him to the end of our lives. Learn, That such as desire above all things to be found in *Christ*, are willing to do, to suffer, any thing, yea, all things; and care not in what condition they be found, how poor and low, how afflicted and despised soever, so they may be found in *Christ*. Observe, 2. The manner how St. Paul desires to be found in *Christ*; this is expressed both negatively and positively. 1. Negatively, *Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law*; that is, not depending upon any thing he could call his own, neither upon his spiritual privileges, nor natural accomplishments, nor religious performances, nor upon his most perfect righteousness and best obedience, for his justification before God; knowing it to be both unwarrantable and unsafe so to do; unwarrantable, because our good works never had the impress of God's ordination for that end; they were never designed to justify our persons, but to justify our faith; and unsafe is it to trust to our own righteousness and best services, because of the many sinful imperfections cleaving to them. Alas! they

cannot justify themselves, how then should they justify us! Our best duties deserve to be thrown as so much dung upon our faces. Surely, we may plead the excellency, and preach the necessity, of good works, though we do not set them in Christ's chair: such then as would be found in *Christ*, though they be ever so careful to maintain good works, (which it is their duty and interest, their daily care and endeavour, to do,) yet they dare not rest in them, nor rely upon them for justification, or make any thing in themselves, or done by themselves, the ground of their confidence. Christ's perfect obedience entitles us to heaven; our own imperfect (if sincere) obedience will evidence that title. Some rely upon a natural righteousness, that which they call good nature; others rely upon a negative righteousness, because they are not so unrighteous as some; others rely upon a positive righteousness, a moral righteousness, in observing the duties of the second table: a religious righteousness, in performing the outward duties of prayer, hearing the word, receiving the sacraments. But though St. Paul was one of the most religious men that the Jewish religion ever had, yet he durst not be found with this righteousness alone, but desires to be found in *Christ*, *not having his own righteousness, which is of the law*. Observe farther, The way how the apostle desired to be found in Christ, is not only, 1. Negative, but, 2. Positively declared: *That which is through the faith of Christ, that righteousness which is of God by faith*. Here note, 1. The righteousness which secures a guilty sinner from the dint of God's wrath, is Christ's righteousness; he is made unto us of God *righteousness*, 1 Cor. 1. 30. Now this righteousness is here called, 1. The righteousness of God, because of his appointing, ordaining and accepting it. 2. The righteousness of faith, because this righteousness is made ours by faith; faith apprehending and applying the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, the fruit and benefit of his undertaking become the believing sinner's, and God is at peace with him: such as will be found in Christ, must have a righteousness, the meritorious righteousness of Christ, to answer the demands of the law, and a personal righteousness of their own, to answer the commands of the gospel. St. Paul here, though a transcendent saint, though an eminent apostle, yet divests himself of his own righteousness, that he might be clothed upon with the righteousness of the Mediator, be found in him as his surety in the day of account, and obtain pardon for the sake of his satis-

faction. Note, 2. That there is no gain to be had from this righteousness by a lost sinner, except it be apprehended by faith; it was not a righteousness of his own that St. Paul desired to be found in, but faith was his own, inherent in him, and acted by him, which did entitle him to that righteousness, called therefore here, *The righteousness which is of God, by faith.*

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death:

Our apostle had, in the foregoing verse, expressed his earnest desire to be found in Christ, with respect to his justification; in this verse, with respect to his sanctification, he desires to *know Christ*, as the Messiah and Mediator, that he might experience the power of his resurrection, raising him from the death of sin to a life of grace and holiness, and taste something of that comfort and joy which is found in suffering with him and for him, and to be made conformable to his death, by a daily dying unto sin: knowing, that if he were conformed to him in the likeness of his death, he should be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Here note, 1. What it is that a person justified by the righteousness of Christ doth most desire; namely, a spirit of holiness and sanctification flowing from Christ, to enable him to live unto him. *That I may know the power of his resurrection*, that is, experience that divine power in my soul, quickening me to a life of grace, which Christ experienced in quickening his dead body when it lay in the grave. "It is as great a work of the Spirit to form Christ in the heart of a sinner, as it was to fashion him in the womb, or to raise him from the grave," (says the pious bishop Reynolds upon the place.) Note, 2. That such as are justified and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ are willing to have fellowship with him in his sufferings, not ambitious to share with him in the merit of his sufferings, but desirous to participate with him in the benefit of his sufferings, and also to be conformed to him in their own sufferings; the members think it an honour to be like their head, their suffering head, as well as their glorified head; and well they may, for in and under all their sufferings, especially for him, they have his presence with them, his compassion to moderate them, his strength to bear them, his intercession to preserve from falling away in them; and his crown, after they have suffered awhile, to reward them for them.

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead:

By the resurrection of the dead, here, is not to be understood the general resurrection, for all men shall attain to that, whether they strive for it or no; but he intends that complete holiness, and absolute perfection in grace, which shall attend the state of the resurrection; so he explains it himself in the next verse, *Not that I have already attained, &c. or am already perfect*; and he shows how diligent he was in endeavouring, in the use of all possible means, to arrive at it, and attain unto it. Learn, That the glorious resurrection of the just, or grace consummated in glory, is attainable, and deserves and requires the utmost care and diligence of the most holy and zealous Christians to be exerted and put forth, in order to the attaining of it: *If by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.*

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Our apostle here compares himself to a person running in a race; the prize which he did contend and run for, was, perfection in grace. The highest degree of which, in this life, consists in a desire and endeavour to obtain the largest measures and fullest degrees of holiness, that are here attainable: the manner how he ran for this prize, he tells us, was by *looking forward*, not backward; he did not look back to the things which he had left behind, namely, to the privileges of Judaism, nor to his past performances; but, like a racer, kept himself continually upon the stretch, with his eye fixed firmly upon the prize at the end of the goal, that he might lay hold upon it, and be crowned with it. Note, Christianity is a race; every Christian in this life must run this race; in his running he must *look forward*, and not backward, not reckon how much of the way is past, but make the best of the way to come: he must keep heaven, as the mark and prize he runs for, continually in his eye, to hearten him on against all hardships and discouragements whatsoever;

and in a word, must be *apprehended* before he can *apprehend*. St. Paul was apprehended by Christ, and caught hold of by him, when he fled from him, otherwise he had never apprehended: Christ takes hold on us, before we have any desire to lay hold on him; we move as moved of him, and assisted of him.

15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Let as many as be perfect, that is, grown Christians, instructed thoroughly in their Christian duty, who, compared with others, may be called perfect, be thus minded, as I am, namely, to believe the circumcision of the flesh abolished, and that no confidence is to be placed in any righteousness of our own, but in the righteousness which is of God by faith only; and if any, seduced by the judaizing teachers, be otherwise minded, and think that the ceremonial law is not abrogated, nor the practice of circumcision abolished, God in his due time will show them their error, and convince them, that none of those things are now necessary for the obtaining of his favour. Nevertheless, in the mean time, he exhorts all persons, according to the measures of light and knowledge which they had received, to walk according to the rule of the Scriptures, preserving mutual love, and avoiding further rents and divisions. Observe here, That in the first and best age of the Christian church, there was, and we cannot expect but there ever will be, a variety of opinions and differences in judgment amongst the members thereof. Observe, 2. That in this case of unavoidable differences amongst good men, there ought to be mutual charity and meekness, moderation and forbearance, no censorious judging of each other, but look first at what is wanting in ourselves and next at what is useful in others: the one will make us humble, the other charitable; and both peaceable.

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:* 19 Whose

end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

Here our apostle proposes his own example to their imitation: *follow me*, who have renounced all my Jewish privileges, all confidence in any thing of my own; and mark them for your patterns, who walk so as to have us for an example. O! how happy is it when the ministers of Christ go before their people, and tread out the steps which they are to take towards heaven; when they can say to their people, (without any upbraiding from their own consciences,) Be followers of us, and of all such as have us for an example. Next, he warns them against following the doctrines and practices of the false teachers, the judaizing doctors, those great zealots for the observation of the ceremonial law, and the rite of circumcision; these he paints out in their proper colours: 1. He calls them *the enemies of the cross of Christ*, because they preached up the necessity of circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law; and so, in effect, denied Christ to be come in the flesh, or affirmed that he died in vain. *Whose end is destruction*: if they persist in their wicked doctrines and practices, their end will be everlasting destruction: *Whose god is their belly*; who chiefly mind the gratification and pleasing of a sensual appetite: they who serve their belly before God, or as they should serve God, do make a god of their belly; we may provide for the belly, but not serve it; that is to serve us, by fitting us to serve God, our neighbours, and ourselves; *Whose glory is in their shame*; that is, they gloried in their wicked practices in general, whereof they ought to be ashamed, and in the circumcision of the shameful member in particular; they are puffed up with that which should rather make them blush: *They mind earthly things*; the riches, honours, pleasures, applause of the world, are things wholly upon their hearts, *counting gain godliness*, not regarding Christ's interest, but only the promoting their own designs. Lord! what a dismal character is this of those men that undertake to be teachers of others! With what a black coal doth the apostle draw their picture! and yet his hand was guided by the Spirit of God, whose judgment of them was according to truth.

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

As if the apostle had said, "As you love

your souls, follow not those false teachers afore described, for they are citizens of the world: but imitate and follow us, who are citizens of heaven, where our head is, where our heart is, where our happiness is. It is true we live here below, but we belong to the corporation and society above, our citizenship is in heaven; for we have an high esteem of that happiness, and our chief concern is to make sure of it, and we please and delight ourselves with the joyful expectation of it, and we live answerably to our expectation; as we hope hereafter to live like the angels in glory, so we now endeavour to live like the angels in holiness." Learn hence, All the faithful, both ministers and people, have a right to heaven, as to their city; they are therefore with their hearts and affections to be daily aspiring after it, and live in hopes of getting, ere long, the full possession of it.

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Observe here, 1. All the faithful, who have their conversation in heaven, do expect and look for Christ coming from thence, not as a terrible judge, but as a gracious and powerful Saviour. Observe, 2. What they do expect at the coming of this Saviour, namely, the changing of *their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*. Note here, 1. The present condition of the body of man: it is in a vile condition, vile in its original, our body is made of vile dust; vile, in regard of its moral vileness, and sinful vileness; vile, in regard of its accidental vileness, as the body is the seat of many vile diseases, and subject to vile abuses; vile considered with respect to its ultimate vileness at death; how does a body, as beautiful as ever was Absalom's, when death comes, run into rottenness and putrefaction! Our sin makes us vile in the sight of God whilst we live, and renders our bodies viler in the sight of men when we die. Note, 2. The future condition which the bodies of good men shall be in, at the appearance of Christ: this vile body shall be a beautiful and a blessed body; the body we lay down shall be rebuilt, formed and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; resembling his in incorruptibility and immortality, in purity and spirituality, in power and activity, in happiness and felicity. Note, 3. The efficient cause of this great and glorious change, with reference to the body;

and that is Christ, *he shall change our vile bodies: together with the means by which all this is to be effected and accomplished, namely, the wonderful power of Christ, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself*. Surely it is as easy for Christ to give a body to a soul at the resurrection, as to breathe a soul into a body every day in the work of creation. But the power of Christ is but a weak argument to build our hopes of the body's resurrection upon, without a revelation of his will: he can quench all the fire in hell in a moment; but where has he said he will do it! But now in the case before us, Christ is not only able to raise, but has declared he will raise and change our vile bodies; so that faith is enabled to make a sufficient reply to all the astonishing difficulties that reason can muster up: and those Christians that can only say, *Our conversation is in heaven, may add, from thence we look for a Saviour, The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself*.

CHAP. IV.

Our apostle, coming now to the close and conclusion of his excellent epistle, exhorts the Philippians to the practice and performance of several duties, which were of great importance to the honour of God, the credit of religion, and their own benefit and comfort; the first of which is constancy in the faith, and steadfastness in the true religion, ver. 1.

THEREFORE, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my dearly beloved*.

Observe here, 1. The loving, affectionate, and endearing compellations which St. Paul bestows upon his beloved Philippians: he calls them his *brethren* twice, in one verse, *his dearly beloved and longed for, his joy and crown*; thereby testifying his fervent affection towards them, his passionate longing for their spiritual welfare, and that their conversion by his preaching was matter of great joy and comfort to him, yea, the crown and honour of his ministry, *My joy and crown*; that is, my chief joy, and crown of rejoicing, that which he rejoiced in more than he could in an earthly crown. Behold in this glass the heart of every faithful ambassador of Jesus Christ: it would not please them so much to have an imperial crown set upon their heads, and to be made the emperors of the world, as to see souls brought off from the world, by their ministry, to the obedience of the word. This made the

Philippians St. Paul's joy and crown at present, and gave him hopes they would be his crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ. May the same mind be in us, which was in this great apostle. Observe, 2. The great and important duty which St. Paul here exhorts the Philippians to; and that is, steadfastness in the faith and doctrine of the gospel in general: and in particular, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, without obliging themselves to observe circumcision, or any part of the ceremonial law: *Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved, my joy and crown.* Learn hence, 1. That steadfastness in the true religion, and perseverance in the faith of Christ, is the great and indispensable duty of every Christian that has a due regard to his salvation. That such a steadiness in the faith of Christ, and his holy religion, is a present joy, and will be an eternal crown of rejoicing to the ministers of God.

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life.

The former verse was an exhortation to constancy; this to concord. Here observe, 1. The persons exhorted to the duty; two women of eminent note in the church, Euodias and Syntyche, who laboured with him in the gospel, that is, in offices proper to their sex, not in public preaching, but in private teaching of youth, and instructing other women in the principles of religion. Between these two good women it seems there was some difference, a want of love and unanimity; it is but too frequent for persons truly pious, and painful in the work of the Lord, to be at odds among themselves: and such are the fatal consequences of such differences, though between two persons only, that they are looked upon as worthy to be taken notice of by a great apostle. Observe, 2. The great care and pains which St. Paul takes, timely to compose this petty difference between these two persons: he writes to an eminent minister in the church at Philippi, whom he calls his *true yoke-fellow*, (because they had faithfully laboured together in planting a Christian church in that city,) to exert his utmost endeavours in reconciling these two disagreeing parties. Such as are sensible of the dangerous mischiefs

of strife and contention, of discord and division, will account it their duty to look to breaches betimes, to quench such fires at their first kindling, and will call in all the help they can, by engaging the prayers and tears of God's ministers, and the endeavours of all faithful Christians, in order thereunto: and all this care, God knows, is little enough. Observe, 3. The charitable thoughts and good opinion which St. Paul had of his fellow-labourers at Philippi: he believed *their names were in the book of life*; that is, he adjudged them truly gracious persons, and in a state of salvation: though none can pass a certain and infallible judgment upon others, yet such as are holy in conversation themselves, and contrite in their utmost endeavours to promote holiness in others, may, in the judgment of charity, be pronounced persons whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

Observe here, 1. The duty exhorted to: Christian cheerfulness and joy; a duty which glorifies God, adorns religion, is beneficial to ourselves, by enabling us to bear afflictions, to glory in them, and to triumph over them. Observe, 2. The object of this duty, a glorious and replenishing object; Christ the Lord: *Rejoice in the Lord.* 3. The perpetuity and constancy of the duty: *Rejoice alway*; that is, at all times, and in all conditions. 4. The difficulty of the duty, implied in the repetition of the command: *Again, I say, Rejoice.* From the whole note, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the great, sure, and perpetual joy of his children and people. 2. That it is their duty to be joying in him always, and always rejoicing for him, and to rejoice in their knowledge of him, in his undertaking for them, in their interest in him, in their influences of grace and comfort derived from him, in their hopes of glory to be eternally enjoyed with him. 3. That to get the heart up to this duty, at all times, and in all conditions, is no easy work: therefore the exhortation is doubled: *Rejoice alway; and again I say, Rejoice*; pointing out howaverse we are to this spiritual and very beneficial duty.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men: The Lord is at hand.

That is, let your mildness and gentleness towards others, your meekness and patience under your own trials, be very conspicuous, because the Lord is at hand to execute judgment on his own crucifiers, and on the persecutors of his own people. Learn, That the consideration of the cer-

tainty and suddenness of Christ's coming to judgment, ought to be improved by us as an argument to all mildness and gentleness towards others, and to all meekness and patience under our present sufferings. *Let your moderation be known unto all men, &c.*

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Observe here, 1. The duty exhorted to, namely, to be anxiously and solicitously careful for nothing; it is not care, but carefulness, that is, inordinate care, heart-cutting, distracting, and soul-rending care, and solicitude, which is here forbidden: there is a prudent, provident care for the things of this life, which is an unquestionable duty. Observe, 2. The remedy prescribed for the prevention of solicitous care; and that is, fervent prayer: *In every thing, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known.* The people of God may and ought to have recourse to him in every thing. Observe, 3. The apostle directs to thanksgiving in every thing, as well as to prayer: *In every thing by prayer, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known.* When afflicted, we are to be thankful for the expected benefit of afflictions; when tempted, to be thankful that God will not leave us to be tempted above what we are able; when we fall into sin, there is cause for thankfulness that we are not left to run into all sin, that we were not cut off in the very act of sin, and did not die in our sins: thus are we in every thing to give thanks. Observe, 4. The benefit and advantage which St. Paul assures them would redound unto them, by the practice of the fore-mentioned duties, namely, *sweet peace which passeth all understanding*; that is, which none can conceive that have not felt it, and none can express that have experienced it. This peace, he tells them, will keep and guard their hearts and minds; a sound peace is the soul's guard against all inward terrors and outward troubles: as the persons of princes are secured by guards of armed and valiant men, who watch while they sleep; so are christians guarded and secured by the peace of God, better than any prince ever was by a guard of forty thousand men. *The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*; that is, through the assistance of Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Here we have a very comprehensive precept, describing the duties of all christians: *Whatsoever things are true*; truth is the principal character of our profession, and is to be expressed in our words and actions. *Whatsoever things are honest, venerable, or grave*; that is, answer the dignity of our high calling, and agree with the gravity and comeliness of the christian profession. *Whatsoever things are just, according to divine and human laws.* *Whatsoever things are pure and chaste*; intimating that we must preserve the heart, the hand, the tongue, the eye, from all impurity. *Whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report*; as easiness to pardon, readiness to oblige, compassion to the afflicted, liberality to the distressed, sweetness of conversation, without gall and bitterness; these are of universal esteem with mankind, and soften the most savage tempers and dispositions. Note here, 1. That there are things naturally honest, just, and lovely, in their own nature, and praise-worthy in themselves, which do raise and refine the human nature; and, without a command, their goodness is a strong obligation to observe them. Note, 2. That christianity doth adopt morality, or precepts of good life and manners, into its frame and constitution, and it is indeed an integral part of the christian religion; not that any moral precepts, though never so good, can raise a soul from the death of sin to a life of holiness, without faith in Christ, and assistance from his Spirit; but the morality which the scriptures teach us, is founded not barely upon principles of reason, but divine revelation, and obliges us to the practice of moral duties, in obedience to Christ's command, in conformity to his example, in the strength of his assistance, and with an eye to his glory.

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Observe, 1. With what great confidence and good assurance St. Paul here recommended his own practice and example to his people's imitation: all those things

which he had by his doctrine and life commended to them, were to be carefully observed and imitated by them. It is a blessed thing, when a people's eyes are taught by their minister's holiness of life, and their ears by the soundness of his doctrine. Our people have eyes to see how we walk, as well as ears to hear what we preach; therefore it is a minister's great duty, by strictness and gravity of deportment, to maintain his esteem in the consciences of his people, yet always tempering gravity with a condescending affability. That minister only can go off the stage with honor and comfort, who has left behind him the good seed of sound doctrine, and the good savour of an holy example: that can say with our apostle, *The things which you have both heard and seen in me, do.* Observe, 2. The promise annexed to the foregoing precept, *These things do, and the God of peace shall be with you.* Where note, 1. Who will be with us: the God of peace: now he that is the God of peace, is the God of power; he that is the God of peace, is the God of patience, who, though he can punish, yet he will pardon the infirmities of his people. Note, 9. How he will be with us: the heart of God will be with us, and the help and presence of God will be with us, to guide and direct us, to lead and conduct us, to cover and protect us; and, if God be with us, we shall shortly be with him. Learn hence, That those which obey the gospel, whatsoever or whomsoever they want, shall ever abide in a peaceful and blessed condition: *These things do, and the God of peace shall be with you.*

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *there-with* to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Our apostle being now come to the conclusion of this epistle, acquaints the Philippians with what great joy he had received their charity sent unto him; and that it came no sooner, he believed did not proceed from any disrespect towards him,

but only for want of either ability or opportunity of sending to him: yet withal gives them to understand, that he could bear want, or a strait condition, very well; for, having Christ for his teacher, *he had learned in whatsoever state he was, therein to be content*; he could bear either plenty or scarcity, fulness or want; yea, *could do all things through Christ that strengthened him.* Observe here, 1. The vicissitude and great uncertainty of St. Paul's outward condition: at one time he abounds, at another time he is abased; at one time he is full, at another in want; teaching us, that the dearest of God's children, in regard of their outward condition, are subject to variety of changes. Observe, 2. The general lesson which they have learnt, with reference to this variety of conditions, and that is, the lesson of contentment: *I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, there-with to be content.* Observe, 3. The particular lessons learnt by him: *Both how to abound, and how to be abased.* They are both hard lessons, but, of the two, perhaps it is harder to know how to *abound*, than how to be *abased*. *Quest. 1.* When may man be said to know how to abound? *Ans.* When he sets a due value and right esteem upon the things of the world, and neither prizes them too high nor too low: when a man so uses his abundance as to avoid the temptations which do attend and accompany that abundance; when he is willing to part with his abundance at the call and command of God; and, in a word, when he attends more to the duties of his prosperous state, than to the sensual pleasures and satisfaction of it. *Quest. 2.* What is it to know how to be abased? *Ans.* Not to be discouraged, or suffer the spirit to sink or faint in the day of adversity: to be not only humbled by affliction, but humble under it; to suffer what God inflicts, without impatience or complaint, without sourness of spirit or discontent; to believe firmly that whatever we meet with is from the hand of a Father: that whatever we part with, is but a perishing creature; that God is able to restore all our lost comfort with advantage to us, and will do it if it be good for us, either in kind or equivalency: this is to know how to be abased. *Quest. 3.* How doth it appear harder to know how to abound, than how to be abased? Thus: there are more duties, and harder duties, required of those that abound, than of them that want. There are more temptations, and stronger temptations, which attend those in abundance than them that want. Hence it is that God gives so many solemn charges and commands to those that abound, to take heed

to themselves, more than those that are in want. See *Deut. vi. 12. When thou art full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God, and thy heart be lifted up.* In a word, I do not remember one instance in all the scripture of a full or prosperous condition, which was ever so much as the remote occasion of the sinner's conversion unto God; but I find in scripture that an afflicted condition has been blessed to many for this end, *2 Chron. xxxiii. 12. Hos. v. 15. Job xxiii. 14.* Observe, 4. The school which St. Paul learnt this great lesson in, to know how to be abased, and how to abound, and to be thoroughly content in every condition: it was not at Gamaliel's feet, but Christ's feet: *I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.* Christ was both his tutor and his strengthener, he taught him his lesson, and enabled him to practise it. See here, 1. That a real Christian is able to do all things, all things that concern a Christian, all things that belong to the glory of God, and his soul's salvation; all things, not in a legal, but evangelical sense; not all things, nor indeed any thing, with a sinless perfection, but all things in respect of his love to the whole law, in respect of his purpose and resolution, in respect of his desire and endeavours.—Again, *I can do all things*; understand it in an active sense, I can deny myself, believe in a withdrawing God, conquer the world, subdue unmortified corruption, and live a life of evangelical perfection: take it also in a passive sense, I can suffer all things, I can bear Christ's cross, wear his yoke, endure any thing for him, or from him, when called forth to suffer. Note, 2. That as a Christian can do all things, so his ability to do all things lies not in himself, but in Christ. A believer receives an active power from Christ, to enable him to do whatever he requires him to do: ability to subdue corruption, to conquer temptation, to bear affliction, and to glorify God in every condition: all this is from Christ; and the sincere Christian may say with this eminent saint, *I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.*

14 Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. 15 Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

Although our apostle had declared in the

foregoing verses, that he had fully learnt the lesson of contentment in all conditions, and could bear poverty and want without complaining, yet withal he assures them here, that they did well in sending such supplies to him in prison by Epaphroditus, as they had done; and thereby testifying, by their Christian commiseration, that they shared with him in his afflictions and sufferings for Christ. Where note, 1. The apostle's thankful acknowledgment of the Philippians' present liberality towards him, now in bonds for preaching the gospel to them; and how he takes occasion from thence to make an honourable mention of their former bounty towards him, even from his first preaching of the gospel to them; nay, when he was gone from them at Philippi, and preached to those at Thessalonica, yet did the Philippians send their bounty after him more than once, which no other church had then done besides themselves. Learn hence, 1. That there is a rule of equity to be observed, as between other relations, so between ministers and people, that as they bestow labour and pains, so they should receive encouragement and maintenance, and this not barely as a gratuity, but as a due debt. 2. That the faithful ministers of Christ, though they may challenge a supply of temporal things from their people, for their spiritual things, as a due debt; yet do they fully receive it, and gratefully acknowledge it, to the honour and commendation of their people, with fervent prayer to God, that it may be a fruit redounding to their account in the great day of account. *O ye Philippians, know, that when no church communicated with me, ye sent once and again to my necessities.*

17 Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. 18 But I have all, and abound; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. 19 But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Here remark, 1. The modesty and great ingenuity of the apostle, in assuring them, that his praising their liberality so much was not upon design to get more: *Not because I desire a gift*; that is, any further gift for my own private advantage; I am far from the thought of spunging upon you: but I aim at your advantage in this,

that your liberality may afford you the fruits of a plentiful reward in the day of Christ, *who will not forget your work and labour of love in ministering to the saints.* Having thus guarded against all suspicion of greediness in himself, and evidenced that his commending of their liberality was not upon design, he proceeds again to praise their liberality yet farther, and extols it in such words as may cause admiration. Note, 1. How abundantly satisfied the apostle was with what he had received, *I have all, and abound, I am full*; as if he had had the treasures of the Indies in his coffers. Grace is content with a little, and thinks that little an abundance; the contented man only is rich. 2. How St. Paul gives an acknowledgment, under his hand, that Epaphroditus had faithfully delivered to him the whole of their charity sent by him; *I have received of Epaphroditus all the things which were sent from you.* Epaphroditus was their chief minister, or bishop, a person of great reputation, whose fidelity none could suspect; yet St. Paul gives it under his hand, that he had executed his trust faithfully. Though a man be never so trust-worthy in himself, and be never so much entrusted by others, yet he ought, in wisdom, to guard against any suspicion which may be taken up against his honesty and faithfulness. Note, 3. The high expressions which St. Paul makes use of, in setting forth the Philippians' charity towards him: he calls it *an odour of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God*; the very same words here which he makes use of, *Ephes. v. 2*, where he calls the death of Christ, *a sacrifice and sweet-smelling savour.* The expression is borrowed from the Levitical sacrifices, which were of God's appointing and approving; and it imports, that our charity expressed towards the members, but especially the ministers, of Jesus Christ, now under the gospel, is as acceptable and well-pleasing unto God as the sweetest incense and the fattest sacrifices were under the law. Here observe, That the Socinians, to lessen the meritoriousness of Christ's sacrifice, do parallel this text with that other, *Eph. v. 2*. "Is the death of Christ (say they) called a sacrifice, and sweet-smelling savour? So is the Philippians' charity here called a sacrifice, but both in a figurative and metaphorical sense only." But mark the difference, St. Paul, *Eph. v.* says, Christ gave himself a sacrifice, which, being once offered, was sufficient to take away sin, *Heb. x. 10*. but the Philippians are not said to give themselves a sacrifice, but their alms were as grateful to God as incense. If it be said from *Rom. xii. 1*. that believers

are required to present themselves living sacrifices unto God, and acceptable: *I answer*, So they are, and so they do present themselves gratulatory, but not expiatory, sacrifices unto God, *2 Pet. ii. 5.* *Ye are a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ.* Christ's oblation and sacrifice was acceptable for itself; believers, and their eucharistical sacrifices, are acceptable to God only in, by, and through, our Lord Jesus Christ, *Heb. xiii.* *By him let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually.* Note, lastly, The assurance which St. Paul gives the Philippians, that God would abundantly recompense their charity into their own bosoms, *ver. 19.* *My God will supply all your need, &c.* As if he had said, "Do not think you shall want, because you have liberally supplied my wants; no, my God will supply you, for your supplying me: *According to his riches in glory*, that is, according to his rich mercy and glorious grace." There is no need to be supplied in the glory of the next life, but there is a glory in rich grace, which readily and plentifully supplies all the needs in this life. Note, 1. That such as administer now to the wants of others, may fall into want, and be driven to straits themselves. 2. That the more forward they have been to supply the wants and administer to the necessities of others in the time of their abundance, the more may they expect from the bountiful hand of God, in the day of their necessity and distress: *My God shall supply all your need, &c.*

20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Note here, 1. The endearing title given to Almighty God, *God our Father*; the word *Father* is a title of great honour; the word *our* is a word of singular comfort. The appropriating positive terms, *mine, thine, ours*, have a great sweetness in them, and breathe abundance of affection. As Luther used to say, "The comfort of the gospel lay in pronouns possessive, when we can say with believing Thomas, *My Lord and my God*; with blessed Paul, *Who loved me*, and gave himself for *me*." Learn, That God is a Father in a more peculiar and special manner to all that are interested in his Son Jesus Christ. The word *Father* implies spiritual generation, that we are begotten by him, and like unto him; it implies vehemency of affection, no bowels comparable unto a father's; it implies designed benefit by correction, that he exercises it unto profit. And in the word *our* is implied, that God is the Father of every believer, the weakest as well as the strongest; we are all the children of God, through

faith in Christ Jesus : and it points out our duty also, that as there is one God and Father of all, so all believers should be of one heart and of one mind among themselves. Note, 2. What it is which our apostle attributes and ascribes unto God, namely, *glory*, and that *for ever and ever*. *Glory*, that is, the manifestation of all his glorious excellences and perfections. Learn hence, That it is the fervent desire of all believers to have the worth and excellences of God everlastingly acknowledged, and in a boundless manner displayed : *Unto God be glory for ever and ever*. This word, *for ever and ever*, is, upon different accounts, the saddest and sweetest word in all the Bible. When applied to the excellences of God, and our interest in them, no word like this for comfort. This God is our God *for ever and ever*. O ravishing consolation ! But when applied to sinners, and what they suffer from God as the desert, the due desert, of their sins, then it is a word of the saddest weight, *Rev. xiv. 11*. The smoke of their torment ascendeth up *for ever and ever* ; 2 *Thess. i. 9*. *They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord*. 'Tis the word *for ever and ever* that sets all hell a roaring, and it is the same word that fills heaven with joy and rejoicing. *To God and our Father be glory for ever and ever*. Amen.

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. 22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of *Cesar's household*.

Our apostle closes this letter with respectful salutations ; he salutes in his own name all and every saint in Christ Jesus ; the soul of the poorest and meanest saint was not neglected by this great apostle : he loved the brotherhood, the whole fraternity of believers, the whole society of saints. All church members are saints by external and visible profession, and ought

to be so by internal renovation and spiritual regeneration, and one as well as the other are here saluted by the apostle. *Salute every saint in Christ Jesus*. Next he sends the salutations of all the brethren that were with him, and of all the saints that were at Rome, all those whom he had there converted to Christianity, and particularly some of those that were in Nero's family, and called here *Cesar's household*. Where note, 1. That such a mighty efficacy had the preaching of the gospel, accompanied with the influences of the Holy Spirit, that it entered the houses of the greatest persecutors, and changed the hearts of some who were most unlikely to receive and entertain it. Behold, here are some in bloody Nero's family converted to Christ by the preaching of the gospel ; those of *Cesar's household*. Note, 2. That sometimes God endues the professors of the gospel in general, and young converts in particular, with such a spirit of zeal and courage, magnanimity and holy resolution, that they dare lift up a banner for truth, and publicly own the despised members of Christ, without either shame or fear : *Those of Cesar's household do greet and salute you*.

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

He shuts up all with the usual apostolical valediction : by *grace*, we are to understand the free favour of God, as the fountain ; and all good things, as so many streams flowing from that fountain ; this is called the *grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, because purchased by his merit, and applied by his intercession. This grace he prays may be with them in the sweet effects of it, and in the sensible apprehensions of it, to enlighten, sanctify, comfort, and quicken them more and more : knowing then the exceeding riches of grace which we have in Christ Jesus our Lord, let us glorify him, eminently, abundantly ; and as we have all things by him, let us do all things for him, and to his glory.

THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
COLOSSIANS.

This Epistle was written by St. Paul when he was a prisoner at Rome, about the same time in which he wrote the foregoing Epistle to the Philippians. It is directed to the Colossians, that is, the church of Christians newly gathered in and about the city of Colosse in Phrygia, by the preaching of Epaphras; St. Paul not having seen their face in the flesh, chap. ii. 1.

Epaphras having founded a church here, and instructed the Colossians in the great and fundamental principles of the Christian religion, he left them for a time, and went to Rome, and was fellow-prisoner with St. Paul there. In his absence from them, the Colossians were infested with false teachers of two sorts. Some were the Judaizing doctors, that is, persons converted from Judaism to Christianity, who sought to impose upon them circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law, long since abolished by the death of Christ; against these false teachers most of the foregoing epistles were written and directed. The other sort of false teachers against whom this epistle is written, were such persons as were converted from Gentilism to Christianity, who obtruded upon the Colossians their philosophical speculations, and some of their heathenish practices, particularly their worshipping of angels, under this notion then, (as the church of Rome now,) that Almighty GOD is such an infinitely glorious being, that man, sinful man, must not dare to approach him without the interposure of the angels, as mediators between God and them. Now, in opposition to both these sorts of false teachers, St. Paul writes this Epistle; showing the former, that Christians, since the death of Christ, lay under no obligation to observe circumcision, or any part of the ceremonial law; and convincing the latter, that Christ, and not angels, was the appointed Mediator between God and man, and that we being reconciled to God by him, have access through him unto God in all our necessities.

CHAP. I.

The former part of this chapter discovers the great affection which St. Paul bore to the Colossians, both in his thanksgivings and prayers for them; he gives thanks to God for the spiritual graces conferred upon them, particularly for their faith in Christ, and love to all Christians, and for their holy fruitfulness in good works; and prays fervently for their increase in knowledge, growth in holiness, courage under sufferings: and that they might be made every day more and more meet for the glory of heaven, styled by him the inheritance of the saints in light.

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. That this epistle to the Colossians contains many of the same things, and often the very same words, with that to the Ephesians, particularly the salutation here is the same with that to the Ephesians; in which note, 1. The person saluting: Paul, once a persecutor, now a

professor, yea, a zealous preacher of the faith of Christ, dignified with the title and office of an apostle, *an apostle of Jesus Christ*; that is, called and sent immediately by him to plant and propagate the Christian faith throughout the heathen world: but *by the will of God*. Christ, as the head of the church, is intrusted with sending out ministers in his church; but the Father's will, and Christ's will, do both concur and fully agree in sending forth his ministers to instruct and edify his church: and woe to such as intrude themselves into any office in the church without their call and commission; let them expect a blow instead of a blessing. Note, 2. The apostle joins Timothy in the salutation: Though Timothy was not an apostle, or a penman of any part of the scripture, yet because he was well known to the Colossians, and much valued and esteemed by them, and was a person of eminent worth and excellency in himself, and of singular serviceableness to the apostle, he therefore calls him his brother, being his *fellow-labourer in the work of the gospel*. Where the great humility of St. Paul is remarkable

and worthy of imitation; who, though an inspired apostle, extraordinarily and immediately called by Christ himself, an aged person, long engaged in the work of Christ, yet is so far from despising young Timothy, his inferior, greatly his inferior in all respects, that he gives him all fitting respect, and puts honour upon him, in calling him his *brother*, they being fellow-labourers in the work and service of the gospel. Note, 3. The persons saluted: the *saints and faithful brethren in Christ, which are at Colosse*. He calls all the members of this Christian church by the name of *saints*, they all making an outward and visible profession of sanctity and holiness; and many of them, no doubt, were what they professed, not only relative, but real saints: he styles them also *faithful brethren in Christ*, that is, implanted into Christ, some by outward profession, others by inward sanctification; or the expression, *saints in Christ Jesus*, may intimate to us, that all our grace and sanctity must be exercised and acted by strength derived from Christ, and all our holiness be accepted in Christ Jesus. Note, 4. The salutation itself: *Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*. By grace, understand the free love and gracious favour of God, together with all the effects and fruits of it: these are wished from God as a father; intimating, that God bestows not his special grace as a Creator, but as a Father in Christ: next he wishes them *peace from our Lord Jesus Christ*, he being the purchaser of our peace, upon whom was laid the chastisement of our peace, and by whom God is at peace with us, and reconciled to us. But why is there no mention of the Holy Ghost, as well as of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ? Because it is by the Spirit that God the Father and Jesus Christ dwell in us, and do communicate this grace unto us; so that praying for this grace is praying for the communion of the Holy Ghost.

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you. 4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have* to all the saints.

Our apostle to give the Colossians a full assurance of the firmness of his love unto them. Acquaints them that himself and Timothy, from the time they heard of their conversion, did never cease to give solemn thanks to God for it, and particularly for their faith in Christ, and for the love which they bear to all saints, to all

their brethren and fellow-members in Christ. Where note, 1. The person whom St. Paul offers up his prayers and praises, his supplications and thanksgivings, to; and that is *God*; intimating, that religious invocation and adoration belong only to God; not to any creature who can neither know nor is able to supply our wants. This God, whom St. Paul prayed to, is called the *Father of our Lord Jesus*; so he is with respect both to his divine and human nature: in respect to his Deity, he is of the same essence with the Father, begotten of him from all eternity; and, in respect of his humanity, he is his Father, being, as a man, conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. Note, 2. The mercies and blessings which St. Paul offers up his thanksgiving to God for, and this on the behalf of the Colossians; in general they are spiritual blessings. In particular, 1. *For their faith in Christ Jesus*; Christ alone is the proper object of our affiance and trust; and by faith we repose the entire trust and confidence of our souls upon the sufficiency of his merits. 2. *For their love to all the saints*. Where observe, That faith and love are inseparable companions; there is a necessary contention among them: faith without love is no living grace, love without faith is no saving grace. Observe, also, the proper objects of a Christian's love: it is the saints as saints, that is for their sanctity and holiness; and to all the saints, let their private opinions and personal infirmities be what they will. We have heard of *your love to all the saints*; love is that brotherly affection which every true christian chiefly bears to all his fellow-members in Christ, for his grace's sake; now the love of grace in another, being so good an evidence of the life of grace in ourselves, hence it was that St. Paul, hearing of the Colossians' love to all the children of God, ceases not to give thanks unto God for it, as the fruit and evidence of their conversion.

5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel: 6 Which is come unto you as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

Here, 1. St. Paul discovers the motive which excited the Colossians to such steadiness and constancy in the faith of Christ, and in love one to another; and that was *the hope laid up for them in heaven*, that is, the

great and good things here hoped for, and there to be enjoyed. As the sinner's misery consists not in what he feels, but what he fears; so the believer's happiness lies not in what he has in hand, but in what he has in hope; the reward which encourages his perseverance in faith and love, is *laid up in heaven*; that is, safely and plentifully, as a parent lays up his treasures for the use of his children. It is both lawful and laudable then for christians to have an eye to the promised reward, as an encouragement to duty; *for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.* Observe, 2. The means by which they came to the knowledge of this hope: it was by the *word of truth*, the preaching of the gospel to them by the ministry of Epaphras; this was so exceedingly blessed by God, that thereby the saving hope of this reward was wrought in them. Where note, The title given to the gospel: it is eminently the *word of truth*, having Christ for its main subject, who is *the way, the truth, and the life*, and being confirmed by Christ the testator's blood. Note farther, that the preaching of this word of truth, the doctrine of the gospel, is the great instrumental mean, appointed by God, for begetting in us a lively hope of a reward laid up for us in heaven: *For the hope laid up for you in heaven, whereof you have heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.* Observe, 3. The commendation here given of the gospel, which had begot in these Colossians a lively hope of the heavenly reward. It is commended, 1. For being one and the same gospel which was preached by the apostles throughout all the world: *Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world*; that is, with incredible swiftness into the most eminent parts and places of the world then known; an infallible proof of the divinity of the gospel, that it was thus owned and blessed of God. The gospel, at all times, and in all places, is one and the same; and Christ, when he pleases, can swiftly drive the chariot of the gospel round about the world, and bring in not only persons and families, but cities, nations, and kingdoms, to the obedience of it. 2. The gospel preached to them is commended for its fruitfulness: *It bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you*, that is, fruits of piety and holiness towards God, and fruits of righteousness and charity towards man. Learn hence, That it is matter of praise, and unspeakable thanksgiving, to the ministers of Christ, when the light of the gospel breaks forth among a people where it never before shined, and is accompanied with early and constant fruits of piety, humility, faith and love, in the hearts and lives of those to whom it is preached.

The gospel bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day you heard of it, &c.

7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; 8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. 9 For this cause we also since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Observe here, 1. The person who first preached the gospel of Christ to the Colossians, and converted them to the Christian faith: it was Epaphras: *As ye learned of Epaphras.* Observe, 2. The commendation given to Epaphras, and his character, by St. Paul: he was regularly called to the work, and a diligent fellow-labourer with St. Paul in the work of preaching and dispensing the mysteries of the everlasting gospel to a lost world: *Who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.* Learn hence, That the knowledge of life and salvation is ordinarily wrought in persons by the preaching of the gospel, by men called of God to that sacred function. Observe, 3. A particular instance of the faithfulness of Epaphras towards the Colossians: he declared unto St. Paul their *love in the Spirit*; that is, their spiritual love, and fervent affection to him, though they had never seen his face, nor heard his voice. The faithful ministers and members of Jesus Christ do affectionately love one another, though they see not the face of each other; there is no such loadstone of love as the grace of God. This will draw forth the heart and affections of a believer to the ends of the earth, to pray for, to mourn over, and to rejoice with, such of their brethren as they never saw, but of whose condition they have heard. Observe, 4. The kind return which St. Paul makes to them for their love in the Spirit towards him: *For this cause we do not cease to pray for you*; there is no such way to attain an interest in, and to obtain constant benefit and advantage by, the prayers of the ministers of God, as to be expressive of our love and affection both to God and them. Observe, 5. The special blessings which he prays for on the Colossians' behalf; namely, that they might be filled with the *knowledge of his will*, that is, attain to a more perfect and comprehensive knowledge of God's will and their duty, furnished with all divine wisdom and spiritual understanding, to regulate their lives according to

their knowledge. Learn from hence, That there is a fulness of divine knowledge, which is attained by none, but should be aimed at by all, seeing they that know most of God's word and revealed will, come far short of what they should know. Learn, 2. That the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, which Christians should especially labour after and attain unto, is of things spiritual: *That ye be filled with knowledge and spiritual understanding.* O let divine and spiritual knowledge be our chief care and principal business! It is called here spiritual understanding, because it is from the Holy Spirit, and conversant about spiritual things, which far exceeds the most refined notions concerning other things; and Christ tells us, that eternal life depends upon it, *John xvii.* 3. spiritual knowledge fits us for the service of God on earth, and for the sight of God in heaven. And Christ has told us, that he will take a second journey from heaven, to render vengeance on them which know not God, and on them which do know (*notionally*) but obey not practically the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, *2 Thess. i. 8.*

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God:

Here the apostle sets down the end of his prayer in the fore-mentioned manner for the Colossians, why he desired that their knowledge should so exceedingly increase; it was in order to practice; that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, and be fruitful in every good work: this is the true end of knowledge, practical obedience. All knowledge without this makes a man like Nebuchadnezzar's image, with an head of gold, and feet of clay. Some persons study to know, only to know; that is curiosity; others endeavour to know, only to make themselves known; that is vain-glory. But to know, that we may practise what we know, this is gospel duty. *Quest.* But how can any person be said to walk worthy of the Lord? *Ans.* Not with a worthiness of merit, but with a worthiness of meetness, when we walk as it is meet and fit for persons professing godliness to walk; when we walk as becometh the gospel of Jesus Christ, in obedience to his precepts, in imitation of his pattern, answerable to the helps and supplies of grace which the gospel affords, and answerable to the high and glorious hopes which the gospel raises us to the expectation of; this is to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. The second branch

of the apostle's prayer, on behalf of these Colossians, was, that they might be fruitful in every good work, that is, labour after an universal fruitfulness in good works. By good works, he undoubtedly means works of piety towards God, works of righteousness towards our neighbours, works of sobriety towards ourselves, works of charity towards all. By fruitfulness in these good works, he means an unwearied diligence, and persevering constancy, in the doing of them; that our fruitfulness be an universal fruitfulness, an humble and self-denying fruitfulness, a proportionable fruitfulness, an abounding and abiding fruitfulness; this is to be fruitful in every good work. The third request, which in this verse he puts up for them, is, that they may increase in the knowledge of God. As fruitfulness in good works makes much for the increase of knowledge, so increasing in knowledge will contribute very much towards our fruitfulness in good works; the way to grow in grace is to grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. *2 Pet. iii. 18.*

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness;

In the former verses, prayer was put up to God by St. Paul, to enable the Colossians to do his will, his whole will acceptably; in this verse he pleads with God, to strengthen them with an almighty power to bear afflictions, the sharpest and longest afflictions, patiently and joyfully: *Strengthened with all might, unto all patience with joyfulness.* Learn hence, 1. That the cross of Christ, or sufferings for Christ, are unavoidable, but not unsupportable; though they will shock an ordinary patience, and constancy of mind, yet might, all might, power, glorious power, which is here prayed for us, and elsewhere promised to us, can and will enable us to stand under them! Glorious power will be victorious power. Learn, 2. That patience, much patience, very much patience, yea, all patience, is needful, nay, absolutely and indispensably necessary, to enable a Christian to bear some trials, and to glorify God in an afflicted condition. All patience, I say, is necessary in order to the cheerful bearing of afflictions, that is, patience at all times, patience under all crosses, patience (if possible) without any mixture of impatience; patience that may give a man the possession of himself, and quiet the whole man, the tongue, the hand, and the heart; such measures and degrees of patience as will keep the heart from sinking, the tongue

from complaining, the hand from revenging. Lord! grant that whenever any of thine are called forth to suffer, either for thee, or from thee, they may be *strengthened with all might, according to thy glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.*

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;

Our apostle having prayed for the Colossians, in the foregoing verses, here breaks forth into the duty of thanksgiving on their behalf, *Giving thanks unto the Father, &c.* Where note, 1. A description of heaven, or the blessed state of good men in another world; 'tis an inheritance, an inheritance of saints, and an inheritance in light.

1. 'Tis an inheritance: now that is a possession only proper to children, *Hereditas filii debetur, non servis.* 'Tis an unmerited and undeserved possession, and 'tis the best donative that a father has to give unto his children. Particularly, This inheritance of heaven, which God gives to all, and yet to every one of his children, is the freest, the surest, the most satisfying, the most delightful and durable, inheritance.

2. Heaven is the inheritance of saints, or of holy persons, only; such as are really holy, universally holy, perseveringly holy, to them, and only to them, does it belong; 'tis purchased for them, 'tis promised to them, 'tis given to them, they have already the first-fruits of it in the Spirit's inhabitation, which is given to them as an earnest of heaven; it is prepared for them, and they are prepared for that; and it shall be finally adjudged to them at the great and last day. 3. 'Tis an inheritance in light, that is, an inheritance with God; an inheritance in joy, an inheritance in glory, and a common inheritance for all the saints. As the light of the sun is a common blessing to all that have eyes to see it, and every person in a room has the benefit of the light of the candle, as if he enjoyed it by himself alone; so is the inheritance of heaven, it is fully and entirely enjoyed by all the saints, as if there was but one to possess and enjoy it. Note, 2. The qualification of the persons who may upon good grounds expect to be made partakers of this glorious inheritance when they die; namely, such, and only such, as by the assistance of God's grace, and the concurrence of their own care and endeavours, are made meet, that is, fit, prepared, and ready, for this inheritance, whilst they live. Our persons must be justified by the blood of Christ, our natures renewed by

the grace and Spirit of Christ, and our lives daily more and more conformed to the doctrine and example of Christ, or we can never partake of this inheritance; without likeness to God, we can have no expectation of living with him. Note, 2. The duty belonging to and expected from them whom the Father has made meet for this glorious inheritance, and that is, the duty of eternal thanksgiving: *Giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet.* As none shall enjoy this inheritance but such as are made meet for it: so those, all those, who are made meet for it, must ascribe their meetness unto God, and give him thanks for it. 'Tis a spiritual blessing, 'tis a transcendent favour, 'tis a discriminating favour, 'tis an everlasting favour: eternity will be too short to spend in the admiration of it, and in gratulations for it; let such of us as are interested in it, now begin the work upon earth, of giving thanks to the Father, for making us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

In these words our apostle declares how God makes his children and people meet for the inheritance of heaven and eternal glory, namely, by bringing them out of that dark state of heathenism, sin, and misery, in which they lay, and translating them into a state of grace, called here, *the kingdom of God's dear Son.* Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness: Here we have the deliverer, God the Father, ver. 10. he delivered us; all that are made meet for the inheritance in light were once under the power of spiritual darkness. The deliverance itself, and the manner of the deliverance; he hath rescued us by a strong hand, as the word imports, as Lot was delivered out of Sodom. Note, 1. That the state which every soul is in by nature, is a state of darkness: sin originally springs from darkness, it naturally delights in darkness, it ultimately leads to eternal darkness. Note, 2. That it is God, and God alone, that can deliver a soul from the power of spiritual darkness. 3. That no power short of almighty power in God, is able to deliver a sinner from the dominion of sin, and the power of spiritual darkness; such is the ignorance and blindness of the understanding, such is the rebellion that is found in the sinner's will, so great the irregularity and disorder of the affections, and indeed of the whole soul, that the sinner is not only unable to deliver

himself, but stands in a direct opposition to the grace of God, which offers to work deliverance for him, till, of unwilling, he is made willing, in the day of Christ's power, Psal. cx. 3. *And translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*; that is, brought us into a gospel state, made us members and subjects of his kingdom of grace, and heirs of his kingdom of glory. Learn, 1. That Christ was God's Son, his dear and only Son, the Son of himself, and the Son of his bosom-love: he is called his Son, being so by an eternal and ineffable generation; not upon the account of his miraculous conception only, nor in regard of his sanctification and mission only, nor in regard of his resurrection chiefly, nor in regard of the dignity of his person, nor in regard of the dearness of his person; but he is very God of very God, begotten of his Father, by whom all things were made; and accordingly he is, for nature co-essential, for dignity co-equal, and for duration co-eternal, with the Father, and, consequently, truly and really God; and he that denieth the divinity of the Son, in God's account denieth the Father also. Learn, 2. That Christ, as God's dear Son, is a spiritual King, and exercises a kingly power in and over the souls of those whom he hath delivered from the power of darkness. Learn, 3. That such as are subjects of his kingdom of grace, shall certainly be translated into his kingdom of glory.

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

Here our apostle further declares how we are made meet for the inheritance of heaven, and delivered from the power of darkness; namely, by our redemption in Christ from sin, Satan, death, and wrath; by a price paid by the Mediator to the justice of God his Father. *In whom we have redemption*, that is the fruit and benefit of Christ's redemption, which eminently consists in remission of sin. Note here, 1. The deplorable state into which the whole race of mankind was brought by sin, namely, a state of slavery, and spiritual captivity unto sin: redemption supposes this; slaves and captives need a redeemer, none else. 2. That there was no delivery from this slavery but by a price paid to the justice of God: redemption is a delivery by ransom and price. 3. That no other price did, or could, redeem us from our miserable captivity, but the blood of Christ: we have redemption through his blood. 4. That although Christ did pay this ransom unto God, and not to Satan, whose enslaved

captives we are, yet by virtue of the ransom paid, we are delivered from Satan's slavery, and sin's dominion: when God the judge was once satisfied, Satan the gaoler had nothing to do to detain and keep us any longer in prison. 5. That forgiveness of sin, or a full and final discharge from sin's guilt, and from all obnoxiousness to God's wrath, was one special fruit of Christ's redemption: he died to deliver us from the wrath of God, and from the rage of our lusts too, otherwise he had but sealed us a patent to sin with impunity.

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature:

The apostle having mentioned our redemption in the former verse, describes the person of our Redeemer in this and the following verses, in such lofty characters, as evidently bespeak him to be a divine person, truly and really God, and consequently the fittest person to undertake so great and glorious a work, as the redemption and salvation of a lost and perishing world. Note here, 1. The Redeemer described by his eternal relation to God: he is *the image of the invisible God*, that is, his natural and essential image; this he is, in respect of his eternal generation, as God: as a child, whom we call the express image of the father, is of the same nature with his father, so is Christ of the same essence and nature with God; his nature is the same, his attributes are the same, his works the same, the worship given him the same; faith and affiance in him the same: John xiv. 1. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me*. Again, Christ is the image of the invisible God, as God-man by him, as a lively image, did God the Father set forth unto us his glorious attributes of wisdom, mercy, righteousness, and power. The first person in the God-head is called invisible to the patriarchs; but the Son frequently appeared, as a *preludium* to his incarnation, in which he appeared visibly to all. Note, 2. Christ is here described, as by his eternal relation to God, so by his eternal relation to the creatures: *He is the first-born of every creature*; that is, 1. He was before every creature, and therefore he himself cannot be a creature; the apostle says expressly, ver. 17. *That he is before all things*, that is, Christ had a being before there was any created; he was before all creatures, both in point of dignity and in point of duration. Thus, Rev. iii. 14. Christ calls himself the *Beginning of the creation of God*, that is, the principal and efficient cause of the creation, and so could not be a creature him-

self, but consequently must of necessity have been God from all eternity with the Father; or else, 2. By the *First-born of every creature*, may be understood, that he was the Lord and heir of all the creatures; in allusion to the first-born among the Jews of old, who were lords over their brethren, Gen. xxvii. 37. *Behold I have made him thy lord*: the first-born is natural heir, and heir did anciently signify lord. Now Christ is said, in Acts x. 39. to be *Lord of all*; and Heb. i. 2. he is called *heir of all things*. Now, how well may Christ be said to be the lord and Heir of all things when *all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*! Learn hence, That the Socinians have no ground from this text to reckon Christ among the number of creatures, he having a being antecedent to all creatures; yea, being Lord of the whole creation; and accordingly the apostle, styling him here the *First-born of every creature*, never designed to insinuate, that the Son of God is a creature, as most evidently appears by the next verse.

16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers*: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist:

Mark the connexion, The apostle affirms Christ to be the first-born of every creature, namely, because *by him were all things created, and by him all things consist*; now, if all things were created by him, surely he himself cannot be a creature. And thus the sense of the apostle's words run easy: Christ is the image of the invisible God, the heir and lord of the whole creation, for by him all things were created: he that created all creatures, cannot himself be a creature; for it is impossible that any creature should create itself. Mark further, Christ is here represented as creator of the universe; *all things were created by him in heaven and in earth*, all the angels in their several orders, degrees, and dignities. 2. As he represented the creator, so likewise the upholder, of every creature: *as by him were all things created, so by him do all things consist*. 3. He is set forth as the last end of all the creatures, *all things were created for him, as well as by him*. Learn hence, 1. That all created beings, from the vilest worm to the brightest angel, are the workmanship of Christ's hand; they are not only creatures, but his creatures; he is

their omnipotent Creator, and their rightful Lord. Learn, 2. That *all things are created for him*, as well as *by him*, for the manifestation of his own glory, as God; he that was the first Cause must be the last End; and accordingly all the creatures throughout the whole creation do give glory unto Christ, some in an active way, as angels and saints; some in a passive way, as damned men and devils: some in an objective way, as sun, moon, and stars; giving us occasion to glorify the power and wisdom of the Creator. Learn, 3. That seeing the whole creation was at first made, and is still upheld, by the power of Christ, it proves him to be evidently and undeniably God: *He that createth all things, and upholdeth all things by the word of his power*, is and must be God. Vain here is the Socinian evasion, who, by creation, understand a renovation of the mind, and a reformation of the manner of men by the gospel; for Christ is here said to create all things in heaven; that is, particularly the angels in heaven; but they, having kept their first station, wanted no renovation, so that it must be understood of the first creation of the natural world, and not of the renovation of the moral world. God forgive these men's perverting and bold practising upon the Scriptures. Can any sensible man persuade himself, that when St. Paul says, *That all things were created by Christ, in heaven and earth, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers*, that the apostle should mean no more than the moral renovation of the world below, by the preaching of the gospel, in which the angels were not concerned? For though Christ was an head of confirmation to them, yet had they no need of a renovation, or being made new, having always kept their first station.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing verses, described what Christ is in himself, comes next to describe him with relation to his church, showing, 1. That he is her head, he is the head of the body, the church; as the head and the members make one body, so Christ and his people constitute one church; he is of the same nature, as man, with his church, he poureth forth of the same Spirit upon his church, he is both an head of authority, and an head of influence to his church; he sympathizes with her in all her sufferings on earth, and longs for the full fruition and final enjoy-

ment of her in heaven. 2. He is the beginning of the Christian church, the root, the fountain, and foundation, of it; the active beginning, or the first principle, or author of it; and of all those influences of grace and spiritual life which do animate and enliven it. 3. He is called the *first-born* from the dead. 1. Because he was the first that arose to an immortal life; never to die more; all others that were raised to life, besides him, died again, but death had no more dominion over him. Again, 2. Because he was the principal and efficient cause of their resurrection; all that were raised before him, were raised by him, by a power derived from him. And, 3. Because he is the pattern and exemplary cause of the resurrection, his members are not only raised by him, but like unto him, Phil. iii. 21. *Fashioned like unto his glorious body.* Was his body raised substantially the same? So shall ours be. Was his body wonderfully improved by the resurrection? So shall ours in point of purity and spirituality, in point of power and activity, in point of immortality and incorruptibility. Was his body raised to be eternally glorified? So shall ours. How fitly then is our Lord here called the *first-born from the dead*? Even herein he had the *pre-eminence*.

19 For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell;

Still our apostle proceeds in describing the person of our Redeemer, and the admirable qualifications found in him for the work and service of our redemption; he declares here, that there was a perfect and complete fulness of all divine graces and excellences dwelling in the Mediator, and that by the pleasure and appointment of God the Father; there is in him a fulness of merit for justification, a fulness of grace for our sanctification, a fulness of wisdom for our direction, a fulness of power for our preservation, a fulness of mercy, pity, and compassion, to relieve and succour us in all our distresses. And this fulness which is in Christ, is an original and independent fulness, and it is an infinite and inexhaustible fulness; it is a complete and comprehensive fulness, and it is a ministerial fulness: the fulness that is in him of grace and comfort, is on purpose to communicate unto us, to be dispersed and given forth to all the members. No sooner had our apostle said, that he is the *head of the body, the church*; but he instantly subjoins, that *it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell*, namely, for his church's benefit and advantage. Learn hence, That for any one to be, or pretend

to be, the church's head, it is necessary that he be endued with all fulness of the Godhead, and of all ministerial graces; and therefore it is the highest degree of blasphemy in the pope, a vain, sinful man, to assume this title to himself, being destitute of this divine fulness: full indeed he is, but full of pride, full of sin, full of himself; and without repentance for this and his other blasphemies, will, at length, be full of wrath.

20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

Here one special reason is assigned why all fulness dwelt in our Lord the Redeemer, namely, to fit him for the great work and office of a Mediator or Reconciler, that so he might happily make up that breach which sin had made between God and the world, having removed the enmity which was betwixt them by his death and sufferings, called here the *blood of his cross*, that is, the blood which he freely and voluntarily shed upon the cross. Note here, 1. That God and man were once friends, though soon by sin made enemies: *reconciliation* doth suppose an antecedent friendship. Note, 2. That though man was first in the breach, yet God was first in the offer of reconciliation: *It pleased the Father by him to reconcile all things to himself.* Note, 3. That as there was no possibility of ever making up this breach, but by a Mediator, so no person in heaven or earth was, or could be found, in all things fitted or furnished for the work of a Mediator, but only Christ; *By him* to reconcile all things to himself. Note, 4. The universality of the subject reconciled; *all things both in heaven and earth.* By things in heaven. 1. Some understand the blessed angels; but there being no breach between God and them, Christ was not the author of reconciliation, though he was an head of confirmation to them. Others understand the reconciliation between the angels and man, thus: whilst man continued in his obedience to God, angels and men were in a state of perfect friendship one with another; but when man rebelled against God, the angels became averse to man for that rebellion; but God being reconciled to man by the death of his Son, the angels are become friends and ministering spirits to us, and both they and we constitute one church, under Christ the head thereof; thus Christ reconciled all things in heaven and earth, that is, the angels in heaven he has recon-

ciled to man on earth. But, 2. Others by things in heaven, do not understand the angels, but the saints departed; the patriarchs, prophets, and all the faithful now in heaven, or here on earth, they were all reconciled, in order to their being saved; intimating, that the blood of Christ did expiate the guilt of those persons who lived before him, as well as of those that died after him: he reconciled all things in heaven and earth, capable of reconciliation, appointed to it, and that stood in need of it. Note lastly, The instrumental means by which all this was effected, namely, by the blood of the cross; to make up the breach betwixt God and the fallen creature, cost the Mediator no less than his precious blood. Lord! who can look upon sin as any other than an infinite and immense evil, which cost the Son of God his life to expiate the guilt of it! How can a little sin be committed against a great God?

21 And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, 22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreplicable in his sight:

St. Paul having treated of Christ's works of reconciliation in general, in the preceding verse, in this he applies it to the Colossians in particular. Where, 1. He describes to them the miserable state and deplorable condition they were in before they were converted to the Christian faith: they were strangers, nay, enemies unto God: *Enemies in their minds*, which implies a deep-rooted enmity, advancing so high as to hate God, not as a creator, but as a lawgiver: not as a benefactor, but as a judge and revenger of sin. O deplorable degradation, to be at enmity in our minds against him who is the author of our being, and the fountain of our happiness! Observe, 1. The gracious change wrought in their condition by virtue of Christ's mediation: *You hath he reconciled*; not only laid down his life to purchase reconciliation for them, but by the ministry of his word, accompanied with the operation of his Holy Spirit, working upon their hearts, even then when they had a strong aversion from God, to accept of terms of peace and reconciliation with him: *You, who were alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, now hath he reconciled*. Observe, 3. The way and means by which Christ effected this work of reconciliation for them and us, namely, by taking upon him a true body, subject to fleshly infirmities, though without sin; and

in that body suffering death for us, that we might be presented at the last day perfectly holy unto God. In order to our reconciliation with God, it pleased Christ, the second person in the ever-glorious Trinity, to assume a body of flesh, that he might be of the same nature with us, and in that body of flesh to die for sin; that the same nature which had sinned, might give satisfaction for sin. And further, to make us completely happy, he has not only taken away the legal enmity on God's part, but the natural enmity on our part; for he sanctifies those whom he reconciles initially in this life, but perfectly and completely in the next, where and when they shall be presented holy, unblameable, and unreplicable to his heavenly Father.

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister:

Here our apostle declares to the Colossians, how they may know whether they were indeed of the number of those who were actually reconciled to God by the blood of his Son, namely, if they persevered in the faith, and continued grounded fast in their holy religion: *If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled*; implying, that it is the great duty of Christians, who have sat under the preaching of the gospel, to be well settled in the doctrine of faith, which they have heard and received; and that the best way to be settled, is to be well grounded; if we are not settled in religion, we can never grow in religion; an ungrounded Christian can never be a growing Christian; and if we are not well grounded in the faith, we can never suffer for the faith; for such as are *septs* in religion, will never prove martyrs for the sake of religion. Observe, 2. The universality of that tender, which by the preaching of the gospel is made unto all sorts of sinners, of reconciliation with God, and acceptance through Christ, which gospel was preached to every creature under heaven; that is, to lost mankind, to some of all sorts; not in Judea only, but amongst the Gentiles also; to every human creature, no person, no nation, being refused or passed by; plainly intimating, that an indefinite and universal tender of reconciliation with God, and salvation by Jesus Christ, is made unto all persons, by the preaching of the gospel. Happy they whose hearts are inclined and disposed to accept of and comply with

them, who in the day of the gospel's visitation do know the things of their peace!

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church;

As if the apostle had said, "I am not only contented with, but I greatly rejoice in, my sufferings, for you converted gentiles, and help, as much as in me lies, to fill up some part of that which is by God's decree behind unfulfilled of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church." Note here, 1. That Almighty God has decreed such a measure of sufferings to his church, whereof Christ, as the head, underwent a considerable part and proportion when he was here upon earth, in his poverty, in his labours, in his sufferings, both in life and at his death. Note, 2. That there is yet a remainder of sufferings, assigned over by Christ unto his members, which must be filled up by them, whereof St. Paul had a great share, and every believer must have some share; for, as long as Christ has a member upon the earth, there will be something for that member to suffer. Note, 3. That those sufferings which Christ's members suffer, are the sufferings of Christ; the sufferings of the members are the sufferings of the head, being undergone for the sake of the head. Christ, in his natural body considered, can suffer no more; but in his mystical body, in his members, he daily suffers, and will suffer till the measure of sufferings is filled up which God hath determined. *Quest.* But why are Christ's sufferings in and by members thus to be prolonged, yea, perpetuated. *Ans.* Not by way of satisfaction for sin, not in order to reconciliation with God; but in order to the conversion of the world, for example to others, for perfecting their own graces, and for increasing of their glory.

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; **26** *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: **27** To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Our apostle, in these words seems to assign a reason why he underwent the

sufferings mentioned in the former verse so cheerfully, as even to rejoice in them; namely, because he was a minister of the church, by the special dispensation of God, to preach the mysteries of the gospel to the gentile world. Learn thence, That such as are eminent in the church, and, as ministers of the gospel, do lay out themselves more abundantly in the church's service, they must expect to meet with a measure, and a full measure, of sufferings beyond others. There are no such enemies to the devil's kingdom, as the zealous and faithful ministers of Jesus Christ; therefore he will be sure to revenge the ruins of his own kingdom. Observe farther, What it was that St. Paul was appointed by God to preach to the Gentiles, namely, that great mystery of their vocation and calling; this he calls here a mystery, a rich mystery, a glorious mystery, a mystery hid from ages, but now made manifest. Learn hence, That the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ, as a Redeemer, was long hid from the knowledge of the Gentiles; and that at last they were brought to the knowledge of Christ, and the participation of gospel privileges; was a great mystery awfully to be admired, and a glorious mercy with all thankfulness to be acknowledged. *To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles,—which is Christ in you the hope of glory,—*which gospel, preached amongst you, and received and entertained by you, is an earnest and ground of your hope of glory. Note here, 1. That Christ is in and among believers; he is among them by the preaching of the gospel, he is in them by the inhabitation of his Holy Spirit. Note, 2. That all true believers, whilst here on earth, have an hope of glory. Note, 3. That Christ's in-dwelling presence in the souls of believers by the Holy Spirit, is an earnest of that glory, and an evident demonstration of their hope of it. Believers have in them a glorious hope, they have before them a glory hoped for; Christ is the ground of both: by him we obtain the end of our hope, even the salvation of our souls.

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: **29** Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Observe here, 1. What was the principal subject of the apostle's preaching; it was Christ: *whom we preach.* Christ was

the matter of his preaching, and the great end of his preaching. Observe, 2. The manner of St. Paul's preaching: it was by informing the understanding and judgment, by directing the practice, *warning* men of the evil of sin, and of the danger of continuing in it. Observe, 3. The end of his preaching; it was to present every man *perfect* in Christ Jesus; that is, to render them complete both in knowledge and obedience. Observe, 4. The indefatigable pains and diligence used by the apostle in that work of preaching, intimated in the words labouring and striving: *Whereunto I also labour, striving*. Observe, 5. The gracious help and blessed success which he had in his preaching, humbly and thankfully acknowledged, and ascribed unto God. *According to his working, which he worketh in me mightily*. From the whole learn, 1. What was the sum of St. Paul's preaching, and ought to be of ours also: to bring men to repentance and faith in Christ, to advance them towards a perfection in knowledge and obedience, by informing their judgments, and directing their practice. Learn, 2. That the faithful ministers of Christ do judge no labour and pains too great, no strivings or sufferings too much, no contending with the errors and sins of men sufficient, in order to the bringing of them unto God by conversion and repentance. Learn, 3. That such ministers as thus indefatigably labour and strive for the good of souls, shall not labour and strive alone, they shall be accompanied with divine assistance: Christ will strive with them, and work with them, *Striving according to his working*. 4. That when ministers have met with success in their striving, by Christ's working with them, they must ascribe nothing of praise to themselves, to their own piety, parts, or pains, but ascribe all to him that striveth by them, *and worketh in them mightily*.

CHAP. II.

Our apostle having in the former chapter declared that the doctrine preached to the Colossians by Epaphras was according to truth, and exhorted them to continue grounded and settled in the same; in this chapter he cautions and warns them against all such corrupt doctrines as any sort of false teachers might be ready to obtrude upon them; whether they were the Gentile philosophers, who attempted to draw them to the worshipping of angels; or the judaizing doctors, whose endeavour it was to bring them under the yoke of circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law, long since abolished by the death of Christ. To fortify the Colossians against both, is the design of this chapter, in which our apostle thus bespeaks them:

FOR I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and

for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

Observe here, 1. The holy agony which our apostle was in, and the mighty conflict he had with himself, upon the account of the Colossians: *I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, namely, by prayer, care, study, and endeavour to do you good*. Here we see how passionately good men long for the good of those whom they never saw; as members of the catholic church, they wish well to the whole, and to every part. Observe, 2. What was the ground and occasion of St. Paul's inexpressible agony and concern of spirit, for and on behalf of these Colossians, namely, this, there was a number of men risen up, who began very early to corrupt the purity and simplicity of the gospel, and the Christian religion, a sort they were, partly of judaizing, and partly paganizing Christians; the former joined the Jewish ceremonies, the latter the Gentiles' impurities, even in worship, with the Christian religion. Now the urgency of this case put the solicitous and concerned spirit of this great apostle into an inexpressible agony, as his words here intimate: *I would ye knew what a great conflict I have for you, and your near neighbours of Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh*. The men of the world little understand, and less consider, what burden of solicitous care lies upon the ministers of Christ, for and on behalf of the whole church of Christ in general, which is continually in danger of being corrupted by false teachers, who every where lie in wait to deceive.

2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

Our apostle having discovered in the former verse that inward anxiety of mind which he laboured under, on the behalf of these Colossians, doth in these words purpose an expedient how the threatening danger might be averted, namely, by mutual love to one another, and by a clear and efficacious faith of the gospel; by these he reckons they would be so closely compacted together, as that no subtlety or violence could endanger them: if by faith they did cleave close to God and Christ, and by love keep close to one another, he firmly believed they would give no enemies an opportunity, either to be the successful authors, or the delighted spectators

of their ruin. Learn hence, That the maintaining of sincere love among Christians, and the improving of their faith to greater measures of certainty and efficacy, in reference to the substantial of Christianity, are the best means to unite, establish, and preserve them against the fatal danger of a ruinous apostasy: *That their hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, &c.*

3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

That is, in Jesus Christ, and in his gospel, are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, laid up as in a store-house, and from thence only are they to be expected and derived. The knowledge of Christ and his gospel is an extensive and comprehensive knowledge, a rich and enriching knowledge; the chiefest gain is loss, and the richest treasure is dung, when Christ's riches are displayed; and after all that we have or can attain unto, of the knowledge of Christ, his work is unsearchable, no finite understanding can reach the depth thereof; for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. 5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

Note here, How exceedingly desirous the apostle was, that the Colossians might continue sound in the Christian faith, and be preserved out of the hands of false teachers, who by false arguments and ensnaring persuasions sought to beguile them in matters of religion: we are in greater danger from the subtle seducer, than we are from the fiery persecutor: sophistical arguments, and insinuating persuasions, captivate those persons whom violence could never have brought over to their party; therefore is our apostle so earnest with the Colossians, that none should beguile them with enticing words. Note farther, How our apostle gives another reason of this his solicitous care for them, namely, his fervent affection towards them, notwithstanding his great distance from them; for though not in body, yet in mind, he was present with them, and having received from Epaphras an account of the good order and government of their church, and of the steadfastness of their faith in Christ, the notices thereof were matter of exceeding joy and rejoicing to him: *Though absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in the spirit, joying, &c.* Learn hence, That a church's steadfastness in the faith of Christ, and

unity among themselves in gospel order, doth render a church a joyful object to all beholders, and particularly to the ministers and ambassadors of Christ, who greatly rejoice therein.

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

That is, "As you have received the doctrine of Christ Jesus the Lord by the preaching of Epaphras, and therein have embraced Christ by faith, so do you constantly adhere to that doctrine, conforming your lives thereunto; and seeing you are thus implanted into Christ, be like trees well and deeply rooted in him, or like a house firmly built upon him, as the only sure and abiding foundation." Learn, That such as have received the grace of God in truth, ought to labour after stability in grace, and establishment in the true religion, that they may stand like a rock, immovable in assaults, and unshaken amidst all the batteries that may be made upon their faith by heretics and seducers.

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ:

Our apostle comes now in a particular and special manner to warn the Colossians that they beware of all the enemies of Christianity whether Pagan or Jewish, for Christianity was opposed by both: the heathen philosophers and wise men did amuse the Christians with their vain speculations: the Jewish teachers were for imposing upon them the Levitical rites, which he calls *rudiments* or elements fitted for the infancy of the church; but these things were not now after Christ, that is, not according to the doctrine and mind of Christ. *Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, &c.* Where note, That it is not philosophy, as such, which St. Paul warns them against; for true and sound philosophy is the improver of our reason, the guide of our faculties, and teaches us the true knowledge of God and ourselves, and is no hindrance, but a great help, to religion; But it was the philosophy of the Greeks at that day which is here condemned, because it was vain and empty, fallacious and deceitful: it was vain, because it conducted nothing to true piety, and making them better; it was de-

careful, because it hazarded their souls, and robbed them of happiness. Note farther, That the Mosaic rites and legal ceremonies, as they were prescribed by God, and adapted to the infant state of the Jewish Church, had a goodness, yea, an excellency, in them; but the observation of them, since the coming of Christ, is sinful, as being an implicit denial that he is coming in the flesh: accordingly he warns them to beware of the philosophy of the Greeks, and the ceremonial rites of the Jews; neither of which he tells them, were after Christ, that is, not according to the institution or injunction of Christ, but did draw away the heart from him, therefore they were both unwarrantable and unsafe.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily: 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Here St. Paul gives a reason of the foregoing caution against philosophy: For in him, that is, in Christ, *dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*; as if he had said, "Let no man impose upon you by a lame and imperfect philosophy; there is no need of that, for now there is introduced an absolute and complete doctrine, namely, that of our Lord Jesus Christ, which has the fulness of all divine wisdom in it, and *the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily* in himself, that is, personally and substantially. Where note, that the apostle says not, that the Godhead is assistant to Christ, but, that it resideth or dwelleth in him; as the Deity dwelt in the ark symbolically, so it dwelt in Christ bodily. Note farther, that Christ is not here said to be filled with the fulness of God, as the Church is said to be, Eph. i. 23. in regard to the gifts and graces which she had received from him; but the whole fulness of the Godhead is here said to reside in him, which can argue him to be no less than really and truly God, his complete essence dwelleth in him. Well might the apostle therefore add, ver. 10. *Ye are complete in him*, wanting no requisite to salvation; ye need not go to the philosophers for knowledge, for in Christ you have complete wisdom; he is above all pagan philosophers and Jewish rabbies; nay, he is the *Head of all principalities and powers*, that is, above the highest angel in heaven. Here observe, That it was the opinion of the paganish, as it is now of the popish, part of mankind, That Almighty God was too high to be immediately approached, and therefore they applied to

angels as mediators betwixt God and them; but the apostle acquaints them, that the angel-mediatorship is vain, since Christ is also their head and Lord.

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;

The apostle had asserted before that we *are complete in Christ*. He proves it now thus: We want not circumcision. Why! Because we have in Christ the thing signified by circumcision, namely, the spiritual circumcision of the heart, which consists in putting off by the power of Christ's spirit, the body of natural corruption; which done, there was no need of the outward circumcision made with hands, and the cutting off the flesh of the foreskin. Observe, Original corruption is a body, or as a body to us, it cleaves as close to the soul as the flesh to the bones. This body, with all its members, we must be cutting daily by spiritual circumcision or real mortification; and, where that is done, God is well pleased; he regards not that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, which is made with hands, but that which is inward, the circumcision of the heart, and of the spirit, whose praise is not of man, but of God.

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Our apostle here compares Christian baptism with the Jews circumcision, and shows, that the signification and spiritual intention of both was one and the same, obliging all persons who took the outward sign upon them, to put off the Old man, and put on the New; to die unto sin, and live unto God. Accordingly the ancients made use of divers ceremonies in baptizing adult and grown persons, thereby to represent the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ: immersion, or putting the person three times under water, either as our Saviour was under the earth three days, or in allusion to the Three persons in the Trinity, in whose name we are baptized: and likewise emersion, their coming up out of the water, resembling our Lord's arising out of his grave. Note here, 1. That baptism under the New Testament succeeds circumcision under the Old, and is a rite of initiation to Christians, as circumcision was to the Jews: for the apostle

here proves that by virtue of our spiritual circumcision in baptism, we have no need of the outward-circumcision in the flesh. Note, 2. That baptism is undoubtedly Christ's ordinance for infants of believing christians, as circumcision was of old for the infants of believing Jews: for if under the gospel infants be not received, by some federal rite, into covenant with God, they are in a worse condition than children under the law; and the apostle could not truly have said, *we are complete in Christ*, that is, as complete without circumcision, as ever the Jewish church was with it, if we had not an ordinance, to wit, baptism, as good as their abrogated ordinance of circumcision. And the Jews would certainly have objected it to the reproach of Christianity, had not the Christians had a right of initiation for their children, as they had of circumcision, which sealed the covenant to themselves, and their little ones, and was the door by which all persons entered into the Jewish church. Note, 3. The spiritual fruits and effects of baptism, namely, mortification of sin, and vivification in grace, by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ, apprehended by such a faith as is of the operation of God, that is, produced by the energy of the gospel, and the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. Learn hence, that neither sacraments, nor the death or resurrection of Christ, in themselves, will avail to the mortification of sin, and the quickening of grace, if Christ himself be not applied to by such a faith, as is of the special operation of God, the faith of his working, and of his approving: this alone will effectually enable us to die unto sin, and live unto God.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 14 Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; 15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Still our apostle proceeds in proving, that we are complete in Christ, and that the Colossians had no need of circumcision in the flesh, having all in Christ that was necessary for justification as well as sanctification. To satisfy them herein, observe, 1. He acquaints them with their deplorable condition by nature: *You being*

dead in your sins, without any hope of spiritual life, and, by reason of uncircumcision of your flesh, aliens from the church of God, (and strangers to all the promises made unto it.) hath he quickened and pardoned, having freely forgiven you all your trespasses. O blessed privilege of justification to have sins forgiven, trespasses forgiven, all trespasses universally forgiven, all trespasses freely forgiven! Observe, 2. What it cost Christ to purchase pardon for us, to discharge us from our obligation to wrath and our obnoxiousness to the curse and condemnation of the law: *no less than his precious life laid down upon the cross, Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances against us, and contrary to us, &c.* An allusion to a practice amongst men, who cancel bills and bonds, and all obligations, wherein they stood bound, when once the debt is satisfied. Now, says the apostle, your debt of sin is paid to the justice of God, by the death of Christ; and seeing the obligation is cancelled, it would be madness and impiety to renew it again, as those do, who plead for circumcision, and practise the legal ceremonies. Note here, There was an obligation upon every man to undergo the curse of the law: for violating the commands of the law, there was *an hand-writing against us.* The obligation must be cancelled, before the condemning power of the law can be abolished, and sin pardoned: none but Christ could cancel this obligation; and not he neither without paying the full sum payable from us; Christ, when hanging on the cross, did *nail this hand-writing to his cross, which shall never be produced in judgment against the penitent believer; but this obligation remains upon the file uncanceled, with respect to all sinners who live and die in their sins, and they shall always lie in prison, ever satisfying, but never able fully to satisfy, this obligation.* Observe, 3. That Christ hath not only by his death cancelled this hand-writing, and nailed it to his cross, but has vanquished and triumphed over all our spiritual enemies; Satan, and all the powers of hell, are led as so many pinnioned captives before the triumphant chariot of his cross, making them a spectacle of scorn and shame in the eyes of God, angels and men: *Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, &c.* Note here, 1. Christ's bloody cross was a chariot of triumph unto him. Lord! whilst thou wert bleeding and racking upon the gibbet for us, thou wert then rejoicing and triumphing for the benefits redounding to us. Note, 2. That Satan, that great conqueror, was conquered by Christ, and led in tri-

umphant before the chariot of the cross. O Satan, thou wert never thus baffled, befooled, and disappointed, before! When thou and thy agents were spoiling Christ, even then was he spoiling principalities and powers, and triumphing over them, when they were insulting over him. The serpent now bruised our Lord's heel, but had his own head and power for ever broken; *triumphing over them in it*, that is, in and by his cross.

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new-moon, or of the sabbath-days; 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Here we have an inference or conclusion drawn by our apostle from the foregoing argument, that seeing the ceremonial law was now abolished, therefore none should take upon them to judge or condemn another for not observing any of the legal ceremonies, either those that related to meats, that is, the difference to be observed in meats, or those relating to the difference to be observed in days. Here note, That the days observed amongst the Jews, were of three sorts: *anniversary*, which returned every year, called here an *holy-day*; *lunary*, which returned every month, the first day of every new moon; *weekly*, which returned every week, and on the seventh day of the week. All which are abrogated, even the Jewish seventh-day-sabbath; and the *Lord's day*, or the Christian's first-day Sabbath, substituted in its place, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. Observe here, 1. That there is both a sinful and a lawful abstinence from meats: that abstinence is sinful, when men abstain from some meats, upon pretence of holiness and conscience, as if some meats were unclean, or less holy in their own nature than others, 1 Tim. iv. 4. or as if simple abstinence at any time were a thing acceptable to God in itself, without respect had to the end for which it is sometimes required. But there is a threefold abstinence from meats, which is lawful; *political*, enjoined by the magistrate for civil ends; *medicinal*, prescribed by the physician for health's preservation; *ecclesiastical*, when God by his providence, and the voice of his church, calls his people to fasting. Observe, 2. The reason alleged by the apostle, why Christians should not judge one another, with respect to meats and drinks, times and seasons, namely, because those legal ceremonies were but dark shadows of things to come; but the body and substance, represented

by those shadows, is *Christ come in the flesh*. And, consequently, to observe these ceremonies, and regard these shadows, under the gospel, is in effect to say, That Christ the body is not yet come. Here note, 1. The title given to the ceremonial worship: it is styled a *shadow*, because it was a dark and imperfect representation of the truth. What is a shadow, but the coming of a thick body between us and the sun! The legal ceremonies were interposed between Christ, *the true light*, and us, and so cast a shadow of him. Note, 2. The title given to Christ with respect to the shadows of the ceremonial law: he is the body and the substance of them. Now as the shadow vanishes when the substance is come, so these ceremonial ordinances were to cease upon the coming of Christ; and to observe them now, under the gospel, is in effect to say, that Christ is not yet come in the flesh. Note, 3. That the Jewish sabbath was a ceremonial ordinance, and part of that hand-writing of ordinances which was to be blotted out by Christ; and consequently the Christian is not obliged to observe it. As the distinction of meats and drinks, and the observation of the new moons, were confessedly ceremonial; so was also the Jewish sabbath, which with the rest was equally cancelled by Christ, as a part of the hand-writing of ordinances; so that to observe the Jewish sabbath, or to condemn the Christian for not observing it, is as much a denial that Christ is come in the flesh, as to observe circumcision, or any other part of the ceremonial law.

18 Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind; 19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Our apostle, having warned the Colossians against the errors of the judaizing teachers, comes next to warn them against the practice of the paganizing Christians, who were directed by their guides to worship the angels, covering their error with a plausible show of humility, pretending it was presumptuous to go to God immediately, without the mediation of those excellent creatures; but this the apostle tells them was a bold *intruding into things* they knew nothing of, God having neither revealed nor taught any such thing; and

argued, that they were vainly puffed up with the foolish imagination of their own *fleshy minds*. Next he shows, that these angel-worshippers do not acknowledge Christ for the head of the church, while they apply themselves to angels as mediators; whereas he alone discharges the office of the head, completely giving life and growth to his whole church, and to every member thereof; which members being furnished with spiritual life from him, and knit to him and one another by the joints and bands of charity and other graces, they grow and increase with such an increase of holiness as is from God, and tends to his glory. Note here, 1. That the nature of man is prone, extremely prone, to idolatry and false worship. 2. That it is as really idolatry to worship an angel, as it is to worship a worm; for divine worship is only due to a divine person. Note, 3. That it is a renouncing of Christ, to make use of angels, or any other mediator, besides Christ, unto the Father: *not holding the head*. It was a notion that early, and indeed universally, possessed the minds of mankind, that God was not to be immediately approached to by sinful men; but that their prayers were to be presented by certain mediators and intercessors, who were to procure for them the favour of God, and the acceptance of their prayers. Hence they worshipped angels, and the souls departed of their heroes, whom they canonized, and translated into the number of their inferior gods, by whom they addressed their supplications to their superior gods. With this notion Almighty God was pleased to comply so far, as under the Jewish institution to appoint Moses a mediator betwixt him and them; and now under the Christian dispensation to appoint Jesus Christ to be the only Mediator betwixt God and man. Note, 4. That it is usual for idolaters, and false worshippers, to cover themselves with a more than ordinary show of humility: *Let none beguile you in a voluntary humility*. True it is, that all duties of worship ought to be *voluntary*, as voluntary is opposed to constrained; but they must not be voluntary, as voluntary is opposed to instituted or appointed; God doth no more approve of that worship we give him according to our will, than he doth approve of our neglect of that which is according to his own will. But man, vain man, likes any way of worshipping God which is of his own framing, much better than that which is of God's own appointing.

20 Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the

world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, 21 (*Touch not; taste not; handle not;* 22 Which are all to perish with the using,) after the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

Our apostle being now in the close of this chapter, returns to expostulate, and argues the case with those who were willing to subject themselves to the observation of the old Jewish rites and ceremonies. He argues thus: "If, says he, you profess yourselves in your baptism to be spiritually dead with Christ, and to be freed by his death from the Levitical ordinances, why are ye subject to those ordinances! such are, *touch not, taste not, handle not*; touch not any unclean thing, taste not any forbidden meat, handle not any consecrated vessel; all which observances were to perish necessarily with the very using: and whereas they were set off with a specious show of wisdom, as if they were voluntary services, and free-will offerings to God; he acknowledges that they had indeed a show of wisdom, a show of humility, and a show of mortification and austerity to the body, and not seeming to give any honour to the satisfying of the flesh; but all this had nothing of spiritual devotion and piety in it."—Learn hence, 1. That such as do by baptism profess themselves to be *dead with Christ* to the ceremonial law, may certainly conclude that the Jewish ceremonies have no more any power over them, or that they ought to yield themselves to the observation of them. *If ye be dead with Christ; why are ye subject to ordinances?* Learn, 2. That though God approveth and accepteth willing worship, yet not will-worship, what fair show soever it may seem to have either of wisdom, humility, or mortification; whatever is the product of our fancies, is a very fornication in religion, and an abomination in the sight of God, how pleasing soever it may be in the sight of man; and yet men are most forward to that service of God which is of man's finding out and setting up; man likes it better to worship a god of his own making, than to worship the God that made him, and likes any way of worshipping God, which is his own framing, more than that which is of God's appointing. Ah, wretched heart of man! which whilst

it seems very zealous to worship and honour God, hath not zeal to do it in any other way than that which reflects the highest dishonour upon him.

CHAP. III.

Our apostle in this epistle (as his manner is in all the rest) having laid the doctrine of the gospel for a foundation, and rectified some errors both in doctrine and practice amongst the Colossians, he comes now to the practical part of this epistle, exhorting them to a conversation in all things answerable to the doctrine of Christ; and the first duty he excites them to the practice of, is, that of an heavenly conversation, expressed by seeking of, and setting their affections upon, things above, and not on things below.

IF ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Observe here, 1. The nature of the duty to which we are exhorted; this is expressed both affirmatively, and negatively; affirmatively, seek the things above, and set your affections on them; negatively, not on the things here on earth; it being impossible to seek and set our affections on both in an intense degree. *Quest.* But what is it to seek those things that are above, and to set our affections upon them? *Ans.* In these two words four things are comprehended. 1. An act of our understanding, that we know the worth of these things. 2. An act of the will, to choose these things, and with the ardour and vehemency of our affections to love them. 3. An act of industry and endeavour in the pursuit of these things, if by any means we may attain them. Our affections are so many springs of motion to set our endeavours on work, for the obtaining of what we love and desire. 4. It implies a clear preference of the things above, to the things below, when they come in competition; set your affections more on things above than on the things below, and show it by your readiness to part with these things. Observe, 2. What is the object of this act, or what it is that we are to seek and set our affections upon, namely, *the things which are above*; God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, together with the blessed state and condition of heaven, and the happiness above; as also those dispositions and qualifications which are requisite for the obtaining of the happiness, and bringing us to the fruition of it; all these are comprehended in the latitude of the object, *The things which are above*. Observe, 3. The argument which our apostle uses to excite us to this duty: 1. *If ye be risen with Christ*; that is, if ye believe that Christ

is risen, and if ye will bear a conformity and resemblance to him in his resurrection, and be made partakers of the power and virtue of it; for Christ's resurrection is not only a pattern, but a principle; it has a power and efficacy in it to raise us up to a spiritual life: *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above*. 2. A second argument is drawn from Christ's exaltation in heaven, *He sitteth at the right hand of God*; which words declare the exaltation of his human nature, and his being advanced to be the supreme King and governor of his church. Now the force of this argument lies in the relation that is between the head and the members, between Christ and Christians: as the head has an influence upon the members, so the members have an affection for the head, which makes them aspire heavenwards, where their head is; because their glorified Saviour, sitting at the right hand of God, by the power of his Spirit, draws out their affection towards him. *If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things above*: as if St. Paul had said, "Is Christ our head risen, and ascended into heaven? let us in our hearts and affections follow him thither, and patiently wait till he receive our souls, and raise our bodies, and take us wholly to himself, that we may be for ever with the Lord."

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Here we have a fresh argument to enforce the foregoing exhortation, Seek the things above: *For ye are dead*; that is, dead to sin, dead to the world, therefore be not over eager in the pursuit of the things below. How affrighting a sight would it be to see a dead man rise out of his grave, and converse with the world, and follow the things here below? As affecting is it to see Christians, who by baptismal profession do own themselves to be dead to the world, yet buried in the world, and, instead of setting their affections on things above, pursuing with the full bent of their desires the things below. *Ye are dead*,—it follows,—*your life is hid with Christ in God*; your life, that is, your spiritual life of grace, and your eternal life of glory, they are both hid with Christ, now with God in heaven. Hid in Christ, 1. As the effect is in the cause: as the life of the branches is hid in the root, so is the life of a Christian hid in Christ; he is our root. Again, *Hid in Christ*, that is, 2. Deposited and laid up with Christ, committed to his care and custody, securely put into his hands. 3. *Hid with Christ*, that is dispensed by him, and derived from him, at his pleasure: of his

fulness we receive, when and in what manner he pleaseth. Note here, 1. Our life of grace only deserves the name of life, our natural life, short and uncertain in itself, and common to us with the brutes, deserves not, comparatively, the name of life. Note, 2. That Christ is the believer's life, he is both the author and efficient cause of it, the meritorious cause of it, and the exemplary cause and pattern of it. Note, 3. That the Christian's life is *hid with Christ*. The phrase imports, 1. Its security and safety; what is hidden in Christ, and with him, must be safe, and out of the reach of danger: grace is incorruptible seed, that shall never die. The world, Satan, and sin, may assault, but shall not overcome; neither lust within, nor the devil, nor the world, shall be able to vanquish that life which is hid in Christ. 2. It imports obscurity; what is hidden, is concealed: the life of grace is totally hidden from the wicked, and hid, in some sort, from the believer himself, under spiritual desertion, under the winnowings of temptations, under the prevalency of corruption; much more is the life of glory hidden, it doth not yet appear; we can no more conceive of it by all we have heard, than we can conceive what the sun is by seeing a glow-worm. 3. Our life being *hid with Christ*, it imports plenty and abundance: *I am come that ye may have life more abundantly*, John x. 10.

4 When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

That is, "When Christ, who is the author, and purchaser, and preserver of our life, shall appear to judge the world, at the great day, then shall all believers who have received spiritual life from him be sharers in glory with him." Here note, 1. That Jesus Christ, by whom believers live a life of grace, and from whom they expect a life of glory, shall certainly appear, yea, and have a very glorious appearing; he shall be glorious in his person, glorious in his attendants, glorious in his authority, &c. Note, 2. That when Christ appears in glory to judge the world, then it is that all believers shall enjoy a full glorification with him. Note, 3. That the faith of approaching glory, at Christ's second appearance, is a strong argument to take off our affections from things below, and place them on things above. St. Paul's argument is, to press the Colossians to set their affections on things above, because Christ is above, and, when he appears, they shall appear with him in glory.

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Note here, 1. That although the apostle told them in the third verse, that they were dead to sin, yet here in the fifth verse, he bids them mortify sin; intimating, that the work of mortification, at the best, is but imperfect, and must be carried on daily and progressively; they were mortified but in part; the old man has a strong heart, and is a long time a-dying; after it has received its deadly wound, sin lives a dying life, and dies a lingering death. *Mortify therefore, &c.* What is it they are called upon to mortify: *their members upon earth*; where, by *members*, we are to understand all the lusts and corruptions of our hearts and natures, all the relics and remains of sin unsubdued and unpurged out of the soul; he instances in *fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affections and desires, and covetousness*, which loveth the world above God, and is therefore no better than idolatry. But why are these called members, and members upon earth? *Ans.* They are called members, in allusion to what St. Paul called sin before, chap. ii. verse 11, namely, a body of sin; therefore he calls particular lusts members of that body, and also because they inquire and call for the members of the body, as instruments to bring them into act; likewise, because these lusts are naturally as dear to men as their bodily members, they can as soon part with a right hand or a right eye, as with a bosom and beloved lust; they are also called members upon the earth, because they are conversant about earthly things, because they will cleave to us as long as we live upon earth: and to intimate, that none of these must be carried to heaven with us, but be mortified on the earth. But what is it to mortify these members? *Ans.* To mortify sin, is to deny our consent to the solicitations of sin, to suppress the first motions of sin, to enervate the power and activity of sin. Learn hence, 1. That in the holiest and best of God's children and servants, there are relics and remains of sin, to be daily mortified, and gradually subdued. Learn, 2. That after God has brought a person into a state of grace, it is his duty, and ought to be his endeavour, daily to mortify sin, and all the remains of unsubdued corruption. *A caution*; Take heed of concluding sin is mortified, because it is restrained, because the acts of sin are intermitted, because some particular sins are subdued. Is all sin hated of

these, loathed, and left by thee! 'Tis more to loathe a sin, than it is to leave a sin; sin may be left, and yet be loved; but no man can loathe a sin, and love it at the same time. Learn, 3. That covetousness is a sin, which, above others, a Christian should set himself against, and endeavour to mortify and subdue, it having a sort of idolatry in it, drawing our love, our trust, our fear, our joy from God, and placing the supremacy of our affections in and upon the creatures. True, the covetous man does not believe his money to be God; but by his inordinate loving of it, and fiducial trusting in it, he is as truly guilty of idolatry as if he bowed his knee unto it; for God more regards the internal acts of the mind, than he doth the external acts of the body. In like manner, the papists do not believe their saints and angels to be gods; but by praying to them, and trusting in them for relief and help, they give them the inward worship of the soul, and consequently they are as guilty of idolatry as if they did believe them to be God.

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

Here our apostle backs his exhortation to mortify sin with strong arguments and motives: the first is taken from the wrath of God, which, in its dismal effects, falls upon those who continue in and under the power of those sins. *For which things' sake*, that is, for the committing of which things, and for continuing impenitent after the commission of them, *the wrath of God cometh upon them*. Here note, 1. God's wrath is the due desert of man's sin; yet is it not so much sin, as obduration and impenitency in sin, that draws down wrath. Note, 2. That believers themselves do stand in need of arguments drawn from the wrath of God, to make them afraid of sin, and to excite them to mortify and subdue it; for here the apostle propounded the terrors of divine wrath to these believing Colossians. The second argument is taken from their former continuance, yea, long continuance in these sins; *In which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them*; that is, in the fore mentioned sins ye yourselves also walked before your conversion; *when ye lived in them*, and took delight in the practice of them. Learn hence, That no argument will prevail more with a Christian to follow on the work of mortification closely for time to come, than the remembrance of his long continuance in sin in time past; *In which sins ye walked some time, when ye lived in them*. Now mortify therefore, &c.

8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

In the foregoing verses, St. Paul exhorted the Colossians to mortify external and outward sins, as fornication and uncleanness; here he presses them to mortify internal and spiritual sins, such as anger, wrath, and malice, sins of the heart. The axe of mortification must be laid to the root of inward corruption, spiritual sins, heart sins: though they are *minoris infamie*, of less infamy and reproach before men, yet they are *majoris reatus*, of greater guilt in the sight of God; therefore a sincere Christian has a special respect to these in the work of mortification: put off all these, *anger, wrath, malice*. *Anger*, or the sudden motions and rising of passion; *wrath* is anger advanced to an height; and *malice* is anger accompanied with a desire of revenge, a rooted displeasure. As jealousy is the rage of a man, so malice is the rage of the devil; 'tis the very soul and spirit of the apostate nature. No sin renders a man so like to Satan as wrath and malice. A malicious desire of revenge is so far beneath a Christian, that it is the baseness of a man, yea, the spawn of a devil. This sin indulged destroys the soul, as sure as murder, yea, 'tis no less than murder in the account of God, 1 John iii. 15. *He that hateth his brother is a murderer*. Observe next, The apostle exhorts the Colossians to guard against the sins of the heart: *Put off blasphemy, filthy communication, and lying*; that is, evil speaking, filthy speaking, and false speaking. Sins of the tongue are to be guarded and watched against, as well as sins of the heart, they are most scandalous, they dishonour God, and discredit religion, and wrong our own souls. The sins of the tongue are little considered, their great guilt not apprehended, but men must account for their open reproaches, secret back-bittings, scuffings, derisions, whereby they endeavour to fix an ignominy upon their neighbour; and particularly the sin of lying is here cautioned against, *Lie not one to another*. All lying is here condemned; the officious lie, tending to our own or our neighbour's profit; the pernicious lie, tending to our neighbour's prejudice; the jocular and jocos lie, tending to recreation and sport. The

scripture condemneth all, without restriction, Rev. xxi. 8. *All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone:* Rev. xxii. 15. *Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.* Lying makes a man like the devil, who was a liar as well as a murderer from the beginning. Observe lastly, The argument to enforce the exhortation to mortify all sin, the sins of the heart, the sins of the tongue, the sins of the life: and that is drawn from the consideration of their present state; they had in their baptism made a profession to *put off the old man with his deeds*, that is, their own sinful nature, and *put on the new man* in baptism, which being renewed by illumination and divine knowledge, and so conformed to the image of God, rendered them now the objects of his special love. Note here, That there were many ceremonies in baptism used in the primitive church, to which St. Paul alludes in several places in his epistles; as drenching in water, so as to seem buried in and under it, Col. ii. 12. *Buried with him in baptism.* Likewise putting off their old clothes, at going in, and putting on new at their coming out of the water; to which St. Paul alludes here, when he tells them they had (namely in their baptism,) put off the old man, and put on the new. Whence learn, That there is no argument more moving and effectually exciting unto holiness of life, than that which is taken from our baptismal vow and profession; the obligation of this is very strong, if duly considered. The apostle makes use of it here as a potent argument, to quicken them to the mortification of all sin, seeing they had in baptism *put off the old man*, that is, professed and solemnly engaged so to do, and *had put on the new man*, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Seythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

Where, that is, in which state of renovation, or under the present gospel dispensation, there is found with God no respect to any man's person or nation, as before there was under the legal dispensation; now Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free, circumcised and uncircumcised, every one that *fearth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of God, through Christ, who is all, in all things, to all believers.* But how is Christ all in all unto his people? Thus, his teaching is all in all in the work of illumination, his Spirit is all in all in the work of conversion, his death is all in all in the work of satisfaction, his

righteousness is all in all in the matter of our justification, his grace is all in all in our sanctification, his intercession is all in all in our acceptance, his peace is all in all in our consolation, his power is all in all in our resurrection, his presence is all in all in our glorification. O blessed Jesus! art thou thus all to me? I will labour to be all to thee; I will give thee all that I am, my soul with all its faculties, my understanding, my heart, and my affections, particularly my love and my hatred, my joy and my sorrow, my hope and my fear, my body with all its members. For thou hast created, redeemed, and wilt glorify the body as well as the soul; and therefore will I glorify thee with my body, and with my spirit, which is thine; I will also give thee all that I have, by consecrating it all to the service of Christ, and resigning up all to the will of Christ, and will entitle thee to all that I do, by making thy word my rule, and thy glory my end, in all my actions and undertakings.

12 Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; 13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Our apostle, having now finished his exhortation to the practice of that great duty of mortification of sin, called here a *putting off the old man*, comes next to mention several graces and virtues, which he exhorts them to be found in the practice of; and this he styles a *putting on the new man*; teaching us hereby, that a negative holiness is not sufficient to salvation: it is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well; a man may go to hell for not doing good, as well as for doing wickedly. Observe farther, The particular graces and virtues which they are exhorted to put on. 1. *Bowels of mercy and kindness*; that is, a tender pity towards, and an inward sympathy with, those that are in misery; and this expressed in outward acts of succour and relief, according to our ability. There is a natural pity which man can hardly put off, it is seated in the very nature of man; and accordingly unmercifulness is a sin against the light of nature, as well as against the law of God: but there is besides this, a spiritual pity, which flows from pure love, and that a divine love; now this is more an act of grace than of nature; this the apostle here exhorts the Colossians to, *Put on*

bowels of mercy: they who have put on and are clothed with garments of holiness, will also put on bowels of mercy as a garment.

2. *Humbleness of mind*; whereby a man, sensible of God's goodness, and his own infirmities, hath an humble apprehension and a modest estimation of himself: the more holiness any person has, the more humility he has; humility is a certain evidence of our holiness, because it is a great part of our holiness. 3. *Meekness and long-suffering*, which moderate anger, and enable us to put up with affronts and injuries. This is a spirit and temper divine, and truly Christ-like; none so abused and affronted as he: but being reviled, he blessed, and committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously. When another hurts thee by unjust provocation, why shouldest thou hurt thyself by sinful passion? Christ was a lamb for meekness; it doth not become any of his followers to be like lions for fierceness. 4. Forbearance, and mutual forgiveness; *forbearing one another, and forgiving one another*. No Christians are so perfect, but they are liable to offend one another; he must have no friend that will have a friend with no faults, and consequently they stand in need of forgiveness from each other. Learn hence, 1. That Christians are obliged by the laws of their holy religion to forbear and forgive one another. 2. They are obliged to imitate Christ in this duty of forgiveness: Christ forgives us universally, freely, sincerely, so as never more to upbraid us with the fault he has forgiven us; such a forgiveness we are to exercise towards our brother. *As Christ forgave you, so also do ye*. Observe lastly, The argument which St. Paul makes use of to press the Colossians to the practice of the fore-mentioned duties, and that is drawn from their election and vocation: *Put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy*. You that had the favour to be chosen of God out of the heathen world, to be his church and people, and are now holy and beloved of God, let the sense of this divine favour oblige you to humility and meekness, to long-suffering and mutual forgiveness, yea, to the love and practice of universal holiness.

14 And above all these things, *put on charity*, which is the bond of perfectness.

Still our apostle makes use of the former metaphor, comparing the graces of the Holy Spirit to garments, which he exhorts Christians to put on: he had mentioned the putting on of mercy, meekness, humility, &c. before; now he advises to

put on charity, or the grace of love, as the upper garment over and above all the rest, comparing it to a bond or ligament, which ties and knits all the members of the church together. *Quest*. But what is this grace of charity? *Ans*. It is a brotherly affection, which every true Christian chiefly bears to all his fellow-members in Christ for graces' sake; or a gracious propensity of heart towards our neighbour, whereby we will, and do to our power, procure all good for him. *Quest*. But why does St. Paul compare charity to an upper garment? *Ans*. *Because, 1.* The upper garment is larger and broader than the rest; so ought charity to extend itself to all persons, and upon all occasions. 2. The upper garment is usually fairer than the rest; so doth charity shine brightest amongst all the graces. 3. The upper garment distinguishes the several orders and degrees of men; thus Christians are known by love as by a livery; it is the bond that Christ's sincere disciples wear. *Quest*. But how is charity the bond of perfectness? The meaning is, that it is the most perfect bond of union among Christians, it knitteth together all the scattered members of the church, and makes their graces and gifts subservient to the good of one another, so that the church is made hereby a complete, entire body, which was lame without it: in this sense charity is called the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

As if the apostle had said, "Let that peace which God has given you within, and calleth you to exercise without, govern your lives, and direct you in all your actions towards men, and live in continual thankfulness to God." Here note, That the original word, to rule in the heart, signifies to umpire, or to act the part of an umpire, in appeasing strife. Now this peace, 1. Inwardly hushes and stills all in the soul, when tumultuous affections are up, and in a hurry; when anger, hatred, and revenge begin to arise in the soul, this calms and composes all. 2. Outwardly; peace of conscience produces peaceableness of conversation; where the peace of God rules in the heart, it disposes to peaceableness in the life. Now this consists in these things, namely, in an unwillingness to provoke others, in an unaptness to be provoked by others, in a readiness to be reconciled when provoked, and in a forwardness to reconcile others that are at variance.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ;

These words come in by way of direction and advice, to help the Colossians in the exercise of the foregoing graces ; seeing it is the word of Christ, or the holy scriptures, which teach the fore-mentioned duties, he advises that the word of God may dwell in, and take up its abode with them, richly and plentifully, that they may be furnished thereby with all true and sound wisdom. Note here, 1. The title given to the holy scriptures : they are the word of Christ, because they have Christ for their author, Christ for their object, and Christ for their end. Note, 2. The advice given with respect to the word of Christ, *Let it dwell* ; not come for an hour, but to tarry ; not to tarry for a night, but to take up its fixed residence and abode. Note, 3. Where it should dwell : not in the ear, nor in the head only, not in the memory barely, nor in the affections, but in the heart and soul, Psal. cxix. 11. *Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. The law of God is in his heart ; none of his steps shall slide.* Psal. xxxvii. 31. Note, 4. How the word should dwell in us ; richly, copiously, and plentifully, in its commands, in its promises, in its threatenings ; let the word, the whole word, dwell in you, being diligently searched, heartily received, and carefully observed. Note, 5. The persons to whom this advice is given by the apostle : all the saints at Colosse, the whole body of the people, are enjoined an holy familiarity with the Bible ; it is to be in their houses, in their hands, and in their hearts, that it may dwell richly in them. Why then, and with what face, dare the church of Rome forbid the common people to read the Bible, calling it an heretical book ? For a reason they very well know, namely, because it is the most dangerous book against popery that ever was written in the world.

—Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Here our apostle declares one special benefit which the Colossians would receive, by having the word of Christ dwell richly in them : it would enable them to teach and admonish one another, and also to excite and stir up the affections of each other, by singing those psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, therein contained, or such others as were composed by the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit of God ; always remembering not to sing

gracefully only, but with grace ; that is, with attention and devotion in our hearts to the Lord. Learn hence, That singing psalms, both in public assemblies, and private families, and therein praising and blessing of God for mercies received, is a great and necessary duty, to be jointly performed by all persons capable of it. Learn, 2. That in singing, a special regard must be had that there be an inward harmony and gracious melody in the soul, by the exercise of the understanding, and the orderly motion of the affections ; if the heart and affections be not stirred up in this duty, the outward grace, though never so graceful, availeth nothing.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Here our apostle lays down a general rule for the right management of all our words and actions, in the whole course of life ; *Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus*, giving thanks to God for all the mercies you receive by Jesus Christ. Learn hence, 1. That all our thoughts, words, and actions, must and ought to be done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ; that is, to do all by the authority and command of Christ, to do all in the power and strength of Christ, to do all for the honour and glory of Christ, to do all after the pattern and example of Christ. Learn, 2. That all prayers and thanksgivings, as they are only due to God, so they must be performed by us through Jesus Christ, that so they may find acceptance with God ; *giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Observe here, 1. That St. Paul, in the former part of this chapter, having laid down general exhortations to live suitably to the gospel which the Colossians had received, comes now, in the close of the chapter, to exhort them to the practice of particular duties in their respective places and relations, as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. Learn hence, That the doctrine of the gospel lays the highest and strictest obligation upon all those to whom it is revealed, to perform every personal and relative duty in an holy and acceptable manner, both to God and man. Observe, 2. The wives' duty of subjection here required ; *Submit yourselves to your own husbands.* This implies and comprehends in

it a reverent esteem of them, an affectionate love unto them, speaking respectfully of them and to them, and yielding obedience to their commands. Observe also, The qualification and manner of this subjection, *As it is fit in the Lord*; that is, in all lawful things, and in obedience to the Lord's commands, and not in any thing contrary to his will. Thus obeying the woman's subjection is service done to Christ; which may comfort her in case of any unkind returns from her husband to her.

19 Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.

Observe, 1. The general duty of the husband declared, to love his wife with a special, peculiar, conjugal affection, and to discover this love by a tender care over her, an affectionate regard to her, cohabitation with her, contentment and satisfaction in her, a patient bearing with her weaknesses, a prudential hiding of her infirmities, a cheerful supplying of her wants, a readiness to instruct and direct her, a willingness to pray for her, and with her; where true love is found, these duties will be performed. Observe, 2. A particular sin, which all husbands are to avoid in their conversation with their wives, and that is, being *bitter against them*: not bitter in affection towards them, that is, cold and indifferent in their love to them: not bitter in expression towards them, speaking reproachfully to them; not bitter in their actions towards them, giving them bitter blows, which is contrary to the laws of God and nature. Learn hence, That it is the will and command of God, that husbands should not behave themselves churlishly, sourly, or imperiously, towards their wives; not ruling with rigour, or being morose or rough, stern and severe, in their carriage towards them, but to treat them with that endearing familiarity that is due to them, as part of ourselves.

20 Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.

Observe here, The duty bound upon all children, and that is, obedience to their parents; this implies inward reverence, outward observance, a pious regard to their instructions, a following their good examples. Observe, 2. The object of this duty; *Obey your parents*, that is, both parents; as obedience is due from all children, so 'tis payable to all parents, to mothers as well as fathers; nay, *Lev. xix. 3.* the mother is named first, because in regard of the weakness of her sex she is most liable to contempt. Observe, 3. The extent of

the duty; *in all things*, that is, in all lawful things, and in all indifferent things, in every thing that is not sinful; though to the child it may seem unnecessary and unreasonable, yet the parent's command is to be obeyed. Observe, 4. The argument and motive to excite and quicken to this duty: *it is well pleasing unto the Lord*: hereby they do acceptable service unto the Lord, who will reward it with long life on earth, and eternal life in heaven. God takes a mighty pleasure in the performance of relative duties; they are not only pleasing, but well pleasing, to him: we are no more really, than what we are relatively, in the account of God; that which we call the power of godliness, consists in a conscientious performance of relative duties.

21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

Here the parent's duty, that is, the duty of both parents, is laid down, *Provoke not your children to wrath*: that is, abuse not your power and authority over them, by being too severe unto them; imbitter not their spirits against you, by denying them what is convenient for them, by inveighing with bitter words against them; by unjust, unseasonable, immoderate correction of them; give them no just occasion to be angry. The reason is added, *lest they be discouraged*: either dispirited and heartless, or desperate and hardened; lest by dejection of spirit they become stupid. A parent's conduct must be moderated with prudence, shunning the extremes of too much indulgence on the one hand, and too great rigour and severity on the other.

22 Servants obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: 23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men: 24 Knowing, that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Observe here, 1. The general duty incumbent upon all servants, and that is, obedience to such as are their masters according to the flesh, to execute all their lawful commands; such as are God's freemen, may be servants to men, though not the servants of men. Observe, 2. The qualifications and properties of this obedience which is due and payable from ser-

vants to masters : it must be in singleness of heart, in great simplicity and sincerity of spirit, and with an eye to their great Master in heaven : with an eye to the command of their great Master, with an eye to the presence of their great Master, to the assistance and acceptance of their great Master, and to the honour and glory of him also ; and it must be done heartily, and with good-will, as to the Lord, and not to men. Learn hence, That the meanest and basest services in the place and station in which God sets us, being done with right qualifications, and from sincere motives, and for sincere ends, is service done to Christ, and as such shall be accepted and rewarded by him. Observe, 3. The mighty reward which the Spirit of God propounds as an encouragement to poor servants in their obedience to their masters, *Of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance.* No service so mean but shall be rewarded, if conscientiously performed ; no distinction in heaven between servants and sons, all shall receive the inheritance there, who have done faithful service here ; and as the meanest service done with right qualifications, is service done to Christ, so shall it be accepted of him, and rewarded by him : *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.*

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done : and there is no respect of persons.

That is, " Such servants as have wronged their masters, or such masters as have oppressed their servants, God, who respects no man's person, and regardeth the rich no more than the poor, will take his time to revenge the injuries and wrong done by either to each other." Note here, The severity and impartiality of divine justice ; God, the righteous judge, will revenge the wrong, every wrong, whensoever, and by whomsoever it is done ; he will revenge it impartially, he will revenge it proportionably ; a just retribution, according to the wrong done, shall be rendered to every one by the righteous and just God : *He that hath done wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done : and there is no respect of persons.*

CHAP. IV.

MASTERS, give unto your servants that which is just and equal ; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

Our apostle concluded the foregoing chapter with an exhortation to servants, to discharge their duty with all fidelity to their masters, remembering, that whatever wrong is done by them, shall, sooner or later, be revenged by God : he begins this chapter with advice to masters, to give unto their servants *that which is just and equal* ; that which is *just*, or that which is according to compact and agreement, either explicitly or implicitly made ; as work, wages, food, clothing, and all fitting accommodations ; also that which is *equal* in reason and charity, is to oblige them to serve God faithfully, to serve their masters cheerfully, not exeroising a magisterial, much less a tyrannical, power over them ; and the argument to enforce it is strong, *knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven ;* remembering they have one above them, from whom they must expect the like. Learn hence, That justice is to be observed towards poor servants, and that there are several offices of humanity and charity which are due unto them by the command of God ; such are these, 1. That we look upon them not barely as servants, but as brethren, partakers of the same common nature, and capable of the same grace with ourselves, consequently not to treat them as vile persons. 2. That we wink at some of their miscarriages which are not apparently sinful, and do not punish every transgression committed by them ; he must keep no servant that will have a servant with no faults. 3. That we do not rule with rigour, without giving some reason for what commands seem hard and difficult, and that we permit them to plead their cause, and to defend their right, provided they do it with humility, not contradicting or refusing to execute the commands of their master. 4. That to well-deserving servants we give something above their wages, allowing them all fitting encouragement whilst they are with us ; and when they go away, not suffering them to go empty from us. This doing, masters will give to their servants *that which is just and equal* ; but how ordinary is it for them that are a little above others to forget there is one above them !

2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Observe here, 1. The duty exhorted to, and that is, prayer : a transcendant privilege, as well as an important duty. Observe, 2. The manner of the duty, and how it must be performed : with constancy and perseverance. 1. *Continue in prayer*, that is, continue instant in prayer ; not that every other duty is to be neglected, that

we may always perform this, but we are always to keep our heart in a praying frame, and be found in the practice of the duty at all fitting seasons; we are then said to do a thing continually, when we do it seasonably; what a man does out of conscience, he will do with perseverance. Nature will have her good moods, but grace is steady. 2. Watchfulness in prayer is here directed to, *Watch in the same*; particularly we ought to watch for the duty, in the duty, and after the duty; to watch for the fittest praying season, to watch our hearts in the season of prayer, that our thoughts do not wander, nor our affections flag; to watch after the duty, that our hearts be not lifted up by any assistance received in the duty; nor be too much dejected, upon the score of those infirmities that mingle themselves with our prayers; but direct the eye of our faith to Christ as our intercessor, who pleads for the gracious acceptance both of our persons and services, notwithstanding the imperfections of them both. Observe, lastly, What must always accompany prayer for mercies we want, namely, thanksgiving for mercies received: *Watch in the same with thanksgiving*. There is no such effectual way of begging, as thanksgiving; God is offended, when we are loud and clamorous in asking favours, but dumb and tongue-tied in returning thanks: need will make us beggars, but grace only thanksgiving.

3 Withal, praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: 4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Our apostle having directed the Colossians to the duty of prayer in general, here he requests an interest in their prayers for himself, and all the ministers of Christ in particular. Whence observe, 1. That the ministers of Jesus Christ are, and ought in an especial manner to be, remembered in the saints' prayers. Observe, 2. The mercies he desires may be prayed for on his behalf, namely, utterance and boldness; ministers depend upon God, as for other ministerial gifts, so particularly for the gift of utterance, and it is their people's duty to be earnest and instant with God for the same: and as for utterance in delivering their message, so for boldness in suffering for it, when called to it. No prayers can be too much to strengthen the hands, and encourage the hearts, of the ministers of Christ unto an holy boldness, who suffer persecution for what they

preach; therefore is St. Paul so earnest here with the Colossians, as he was before with the Ephesians, chap. vi. 18, and with the Romans, chap. xv. 30, desiring them to strive together in their prayers for him: where, by the way, remark, That the apostle thus passionately desiring the living saints to pray for him, but never once desiring the prayers and intercessions of the saints departed, nor of the Virgin Mary, is an evidence that he approved not of their prayers, nor looked upon them as mediators and intercessors with God then, as the church of Rome does now.

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without,—

By *them without*, are meant the heathen, who are yet without the pale of the visible church; to *walk in wisdom toward them* is a duty of great latitude, but imports particularly here an endeavour to the uttermost to promote their conversion and salvation, by begetting in them a due veneration for the gospel, and a love and liking to the Christian religion. Learn hence, That private Christians, by walking wisely before them that are yet unconverted effectually to Christianity, may be exceedingly helpful to promote the entertainment of the gospel amongst them. They may pray, and pray in faith, for their conversion, and the further spreading of the gospel, in order to that end. The ardent devotions and the holy conversation of private Christians are excellent means to recommend the gospel and the Christian religion, and to represent them as most amiable and desirable.

—Redeeming the time.

Having, in the former part of the verse, directed the Colossians to walk wisely before the unconverted gentiles that were among them, in this latter part of the verse he advises them to redeem every opportunity for gaining over those infidels to the Christian religion. A Christian that knows the worth of time, will redeem it, will improve it for the soul, for the benefit of his own soul, and for the advantage of others; see note on Eph. v. 16.

6 Let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Direction is here given to all Christians for the right government of the tongue, and well ordering of the speech, that it be not corrupt and rotten, filthy or frothy, vain and unprofitable, but mild and courteous, savoury and gracious, wise and discreet.

Note here, 1. That we are not left at random in our ordinary discourse, to let our tongue run riot and talk what we please, without any regard to the edification of others. Note, 2. That there ought to be both a gracefulness and grace in our speech, some savour of piety, something that may testify there is grace wrought in ourselves, and tends to the working of grace in others. Note, 3. That our speech may be thus savoury at all times, it must be *seasoned with salt*. With the salt of truth: there must be an agreement betwixt the thing and our words, without falsehood; and an agreement betwixt our tongue and our hearts, without dissimulation. 2. With the salt of wisdom and prudence; this will teach us the time when, the manner how, and measure how much, to speak; those words must needs be unsavoury, that have neither truth nor prudence in them. The people wondered of old at the gracious words which came out of Christ's mouth; and we may justly wonder at the graceless words which come out of the mouth of many that are called Christians.

7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: 8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your state and comfort your hearts: 9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which *are done* here.

Observe here, 1. That although St. Paul had now with him but a few friends at Rome to comfort him in his bonds, yet he spares two of them to visit and comfort these Colossians. See the public spirit of our apostle, who preferred the common good of the church at Colosse, before his own comfort at Rome. Observe, 2. The persons whom St. Paul sent to them, Tychicus and Onesimus, whom he styles the brethren, faithful brethren, beloved brethren; nothing endears persons so much to one another, as religion and the grace of God. These ties are stronger than those of nature: no such love as likeness occasions, especially likeness to God. Observe, 3. The design and end of St. Paul's sending these two persons to them, namely, 1. *To make known unto them all things done at Rome*; mark, all things without exception, both his doings and sufferings, both in public and private, the apostle was ashamed of neither. Happy it is, when the conver-

sation of Christ's ministers in such, both in public and private, that they need not be ashamed to have it known, or that the church may understand it. 2. That he might comfort their hearts: how could Tychicus and Onesimus do this? 1. By making known to them the true cause of his sufferings, that it was for the gospel's sake. 2. To keep them from discouragement at the report of his sufferings, that they might not be offended at his chain, nor sink under the burden of immoderate sorrow upon his account. 3. To comfort their hearts, with the report of that holy joy and cheerfulness which the apostle had in his own spirit, under the present burden of his sufferings. See the note on *Eph.* vi. 22.

10 Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him:) 11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only *are* my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

Our apostle coming now to the conclusion of his excellent letter, sendeth (as his manner was) particular salutations to those he wrote to. These salutations were both from others and himself. Here we have three of St. Paul's companions sending salutations to the church at Colosse, namely, Aristarchus, a fellow-prisoner; Mark, sister's son to Barnabas, who though he did desert St. Paul and Barnabas, and went not with them to the work, yet returning to his duty, he is recommended to the church's reception; and Jesus, who was called Justus possibly from his just conversation. Jesus is the same with Joshua, signifying a Saviour: however we do not find that any Christians, since their Lord's resurrection, did ever give their children the name of Jesus, out of a due reverence to their Lord and Master, who is a God-man, blessed for evermore. Now, we learn, that neither distance of place, nor length of time, ought to cool that love and good will, that hearty and sincere affection, which Christians should bear one to another. Note farther, that as in the large catalogue of salutations, which St. Paul wrote to the saints at Rome, *Rom.* xvi. in which particular persons are mentioned, St. Peter's name is not once mentioned: so here in this catalogue of salutations sent from Rome, no mention is made of Peter's name neither

doubtless had he been at Rome, he had sent salutations as well as the rest; here are salutations from Aristarchus, Mark, and others, none from Peter. Behold here the weak ground which the pope builds his pretended supremacy and headship upon, namely, that he is St. Peter's successor, who was bishop of Rome: though now it can never be proved that St. Peter exercised any supremacy over the rest of the apostles, it can less be proved that ever he was bishop of Rome; nor is there any word in scripture to prove that he ever was at Rome, but rather the contrary; it is certain he was not at Rome when St. Paul wrote this epistle, there being only these, he says, whom he mentions, who are his fellow-labourers unto the kingdom of God.

12 Epaphras, who is *one of you*, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them *that are in* Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.

Our apostle next mentions the particular salutation sent from Rome to the church at Colosse by Epaphras, who is described from his country; he is *one of you*, that is, a citizen of Colosse; by his office, *a servant of Christ*, that is a minister of the gospel; by his fervour and affection towards these Colossians, evidenced by his prayers for them, *he labours fervently for you in his prayers*. The word signifies to strive as in an agony, pointing out our ministerial duty to us, not only to preach unto, and to pray with, but fervently to pray for, our people. God forgive our forgetfulness of, our backwardness to, our remissness in, this part of our duty! Too seldom do we bear our people upon our hearts, when we go in and out before the Lord. O! how far are we from praying ourselves into an agony for them, when our petitions freeze within our lips, which we put for our own souls. One thing might be here noted further concerning Epaphras: he was minister of (some think bishop of) Colosse; yet was he born there, he is *one of you*, that is, of your city. Now Christ tells us, a minister is in hazard to meet disrespect in his own country, he is usually of no honour there. However, Epaphras being called to the work of God in the place where he was born, embraces it, and God gives him reputation with the people for his faithfulness in his place. Observe lastly, What

was the subject-matter of Epaphras's prayer for his people at Colosse, namely, *That they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*; it is the desire and prayer, the care and endeavour, of every faithful minister of Christ, that his people may stand fast in their obedience, in universal obedience, in perfect and complete obedience to the will, the whole will, of God in all things. Yet one thing more is observable in Epaphras, he had not only a great zeal for his own people at Colosse, but for them at Laodicea and Hierapolis, which were neighbouring churches. Learn thence, that the ministers of Christ are to look upon themselves as ministers of the whole church; and although they take care of a particular congregation, yet is it their duty to desire and endeavour, that all Christians within the reach of their ministerial labours may find some special benefit and advantage by them. Epaphras had a fervent zeal for the churches in Laodicea and Hierapolis, as well as at Colosse, and it was his commendation that he had so.

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

Still our apostle is sending salutations from Rome to the Colossians. 1. From St. Luke, who of a physician for the body, becomes a physician for the soul, as Matthew of a publican became a preacher. Luke well deserved the title here given him of *beloved*, in that he undertook the ministry at a time when civil authority did allow no maintenance for ministers, and when his employment as a physician would probably have advantaged him much more. *Luke, the beloved physician, greets you.* 2. Demas also, who when persecution grew hot, his affections grew cold, yet now he sends salutations with the rest to the church at Colosse. St. Paul complains of his forsaking of him, 2 Tim. iv. 10. for the sake of this present world. Let no professor judge of himself by his external profession, by his performance of outward duties, by his associating himself with the people of God, nay, by his sufferings with the servants of God, (Demas did all this,) but by their sincere love to Christ, and persevering faithfulness in the trying hour of temptation: we know not what we are, till sufferings appear.

15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

Our apostle had sent the salutations of others to them before; he sends his own now. 1. Generally, to all the Christian

brethren which were in *Laodicea*, to whom he directs this epistle to be read, in the next verse. Now to prepare them to hear it with great attention, he sends salutations particularly to them; *Salute the brethren in Laodicea*. No particular people must desire or expect to monopolize and engross the whole of a minister's affections to themselves; but as he is the minister of the catholic church, so it is both his duty and desire that all particular churches, yea, individual Christians, should share in his affectionate love towards them, in his care and concern for them. He salutes *Nymphas* in particular, a person perhaps very eminent for piety and charity, as may be gathered from the following words, *And the church which is in his house*. By which, 1. Understand his family and household, who were so piously instructed, so religiously governed, so devoutly disposed, as if they had been a church. Learn thence, That masters of families should train up their household in religion and godliness, instructing, reproving, exhorting, all that are under their care, that their house may deserve the name of a church; *The church which is in his house*. 2. Some, by the church in his house, understand a material house, or some particular room in his house, which he had given to a certain number of the Christians for a place of public worship. Although the church in the apostles' times had not the countenance of civil authority, to provide either places for worship, or maintenance for ministers; yet such fervour of zeal was found in the breasts of Christians, that then such as were of ability wanted not for inclination to contribute largely and freely unto both; charity moved to give more than, than force of law can compel and constrain now; *Nymphas* gives his house to be a place of public worship to the church. See the learned Mr. Mede on 1 Cor. xi. 22.

16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the *Laodiceans*;—

Here St. Paul directs to the reading of this epistle themselves, which the Spirit of God had directed him to write unto them. *Let this epistle be read amongst you*. All holy scripture is to be read and perused by every private Christian; the same Spirit that did indite the scriptures, requires the reading and understanding of them. And further, St. Paul desires this epistle, being read amongst the *Colossians*, should next be read in the church of *Laodicea*; who being their neighbours received the same poison or errors from the false teachers

crept in amongst them, and consequently stood in need of the same antidote. That doctrine which is directed to some particular church or person, recorded in scripture, was of universal use then, and may be now, to all particular persons and societies.

—And that ye likewise read the epistle from *Laodicea*.

Much controversy has arisen in the church about this epistle from *Laodicea*; some have affirmed, that it was written by St. Paul to the *Laodiceans*, but lost; from whence they would infer, that the canon of the scripture is not entire. But supposing it were so, yet it follows not but that we have all things necessary to salvation in the holy scriptures. It is very probable that St. Paul himself, and several other apostles, wrote more epistles than are in the Bible. What then? We have what the wisdom of God thought fit to hand down to us, and what is sufficient to make the serious reader of it wise unto salvation. Surely Almighty God was not bound to bring down all that they wrote to us, but only what his own wisdom saw fit and necessary for us. Others understand it of an epistle from *Laodicea* to St. Paul, and that he answered it fully in this epistle to the *Colossians*, and sending it back, desired the *Colossians* might read it, for better clearing of some passages in his epistle to them. Lastly, Some understand it of the epistle to the *Ephesians*, *Ephesus* being the metropolis, or the chief city, of *Laodicea*; and accordingly, some call the epistle to the *Ephesians*, the epistle to the *Laodiceans*. The truth is, there is a very great affinity betwixt the epistle to the *Ephesians*, and this to the *Colossians*; the doctrines, exhortations, and many expressions, are the very same: so that it is no wonder if he desired they should both be read at *Colosse*, to let them see that he wrote the same doctrine to other churches, which he had done to them.

17 And say to *Archippus*, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

This *Archippus* is, with good reason, supposed to be the minister at *Colosse*, in the room of *Epaphras*, now with St. Paul at Rome. Some think, that in the absence of *Epaphras*, he was grown somewhat remiss and slack in his ministerial duty, he directs therefore the *Colossians* to admonish him to the exercise of greater diligence, in discharging all the parts of his trust, committed by Christ unto him. Say unto *Archippus*, Take heed, &c. Observe here, A double charge, 1. A charge of message,

Say unto Archippus. The Colossians must say it. St. Paul could have wrote a private letter to him; but they must excite him, yea, say to him to his face, not of him behind his back. 'Tis the people's duty to stir up their ministers to the faithful performance of their duty; the fire of our ministerial zeal doth not burn so bright, but we may need our people's bellows to inflame it; but this must be done with prudence by the people, in a way of exhortation, not by way of exprobaton; so stir up your minister to his duty, that you forget not your own. 2. The charge of an office, *Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it.* Here note, 1. A duty enjoined; to fulfil the ministry. But what is that: Negatively, not to secure the success of our ministry; we may deliver our own souls, though our people's be not delivered: the nurse is not charged with the life of the child, but with the care of the child, she shall be paid whether it live or die; nor is it absolutely to perform every part of our ministerial duty without the least deficiency. No, we rejoice in the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have done our duty. Positively: to fulfil the ministry, is to perform all the parts of our duty with care and faithfulness, to persevere in diligence, particularly public preaching and private inspection. A non-preaching minister is no minister, a breastless nurse, a murderer of souls, a bell without a clapper, a crier without a voice; yet doth not his work lie all in the pulpit, but the greatest part out of it. He is styled a watchman: For what? because he is to watch one hour with his people in a week? No, surely, but because he is to watch over them, and converse with them all the week, upon occasion. Is not the physician to visit his patient, as well as to prescribe his physic? Doth the husbandman cast his seed into the ground, and never come into the fields to see whether it comes up, or how it grows? Verily, our people are great gainers by our profitable converse with them, and we shall be gainers by them too. We may gain more experimental knowledge by an afternoon's visiting our people, than by a week's study. Note,

2. The means here directed to, for the fulfilling of the ministry, *Take heed to the ministry.* What doth that import? 1. Take heed to thy study; ministerial abilities are not rained down like manna upon us. The apostles did not study indeed, but one reason was, they had no time to study, they were itinerary preachers. 2. Take heed to thy doctrine, that it be the true word of God, and delivered purely; not only in opposition to error, but in opposition to levity. 3. *Take heed*, that is, to thy life and practice, that we may tread out the steps before our people, which they are to make towards heaven. Note, 3. The motive to stir us all up to the fulfilling of our ministerial trust; We have received it; there is the importance of a special favour, and also the importance of a strict account; what we have received, we must give an account for. 2. We have received it of or from the Lord; this implies assistance: that God that has called us to it, will assist us in it: *Lo, I am with you always unto the end of the world*; with you to assist, with you to succeed, with you to reward. Let Archippus then, every one in the work of Christ, *take heed to the ministry*, which he has received of the Lord, that he fulfil it.

18 The salutation by the hand of me, Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

Here our apostle closes his epistle with a general salutation under his own hand, intimating thereby, that he had not wrote the whole with his own hands. He begs them to *remember his bonds*; that is, 1. To sympathize with him in his bonds. 2. To pray for him in his bonds. 3. To receive the word of God, which he had written to them in his bonds. 4. To prepare for sufferings themselves, his bonds being but the forerunners of their bonds. Thus it is the people's duty to remember the pious ministers in their bonds. He adds, *Grace be with you*, wishing them an abiding interest in the special favour of God, with a multiplied increase of all spiritual blessings flowing from thence; increase of all grace to enable them to glorify God on earth, and to prepare them for glory with God in heaven. Amen.

THE
FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
THESSALONIANS.

This Epistle to the Thessalonians, though placed last, yet is supposed to have been written first by St. Paul to this particular church; and not without probability, because the gospel was more early preached at Thessalonica, than either at Rome or Corinth, as appears by the Acts of the Apostles.

Thessalonica was the chief city in Macedonia, whither St. Paul, in a vision, was directed to go and preach the gospel; accordingly he went, Acts xvi. and xvii. and laid very early the foundation of a Christian church in this city, which consisting partly of Jews, and partly of Gentiles, they were severely persecuted by both. Now the apostle hearing what hard things the Thessalonians suffered, he writes this epistle to confirm them in the faith, and to prevent them being shaken by those persecutions.

To encourage them to perseverance in the faith, and patience under their present persecutions, he first informs them, that it was nothing strange that they should suffer thus from those Jews and Pagans, "who had killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and were contrary to all men;" and then puts them in mind of the transcendent reward laid up for them, and the severe punishments that were prepared for their persecutors. And, lastly, he animates and encourages them by the example of his own constancy, to persevere in their holy profession; and concludes this epistle to them with particular exhortations to holiness of life, and unblameableness in conversation.

CHAP. I.

PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, *which is* in God the Father, and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Paul begins this epistle, as he does the rest, with a very kind and gracious salutation; in which we have observable, the persons saluting, the parties saluted, and the salutation itself. Note, 1. The persons saluting, Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus: Paul only was the inspired writer of the epistle, the other two were his associates and assistants, instruments with him in converting the Thessalonians to Christianity, and whom they had a deservedly great affection for; he joins them therefore with himself, as asserters and approvers of the truth contained in this his epistle, that so he might procure the greater respect to the doctrines it contained; he therefore names them with himself, Paul, Silvanus, or Silas, as he is called, Acts xviii. and Timotheus; but why not Paul an apostle, or Paul a servant of

Jesus Christ, as in other epistles, but bare Paul only? *Ans.* Because his apostleship was not at all questioned by them; the Thessalonians had a seal of it in their hearts; and there were no false apostles among them, that denied his apostleship, as the Galatians and other churches had. The prudent and faithful ministers of Christ know both how and when to use those titles of honour and respect which God hath given them, and also when it is convenient to forbear the assuming of them. Note, 2. The persons saluted, *The church of the Thessalonians.* Thessalonica was the metropolis, or the mother-city, of Macedonia, where the Christian church was planted by the ministry of St. Paul and Silas, but with great opposition from the Jews, who forced Paul to fly to Berea for his own safety, Acts xvii. and Jason, with others that entertained him, had like to have been sacrificed in their own houses; yet there, in despite of the devil's rage, and persecutors' malice, doth God erect a glorious church, a Christian church, in honour of his Son, who purchased it with his blood. Learn hence, That when and where God will gather to himself a church, no opposition either of men or devils shall be sufficient to hinder it; as in Rome itself, nay, in the court of

Nero, under the nose of that bloody tyrant, was a church collected, *Phil. iv. 22.* No wonder the devil struggles, when his kingdom totters; it follows, which (church) is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, established in the knowledge, faith, worship, and obedience, of God the Father; they were Gentiles, called off from their dumb idols, to serve the living and true God, and were distinguished from all other societies and communions whatsoever; they were in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, they enjoyed a blessed union with Jesus Christ by faith, and a sweet communion and fellowship both with Father and Son, by the bond of the Spirit. Behold the high dignity and glorious privilege of the Christian church, to be thus knit and united, both to the Father and the Son, by the agency of the Holy Spirit! *To the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Note, 3. The salutation itself, *Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Where observe, 1. The option of blessings wished, *grace and peace.* *Grace*, in scripture, signifies first, the gracious favour of God towards us; and next, all the gifts of grace, all benefits and blessings issuing forth and flowing from thence: *Peace* usually signifies, in scripture language, all manner of outward prosperity and happiness. 2. The author and fountain from whence these blessings flow. 1. From God the Father. 2. From the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ; intimating, That whatever spiritual grace or temporal blessing we now receive from God, is from him, not barely as Creator, but as a Father, a gracious Father in Christ, in whom he pours out the immensity of his love upon us, and through whom he conveys all kinds of blessings unto us.

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers: 3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father:

Note here, 1. The holy wisdom of our apostle, who being about to magnify and extol the grace of the spirit wrought in the Thessalonians, particularly their faith, their love, their patience and hope, instead of commending them for these graces, he breaks forth into thanksgivings unto God for them; *We give thanks to God always for your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope:* his business was not to

celebrate and commend them, but to admire the special grace of God conferred upon them, and conspicuous in them. Learn hence, That it is our duty, and will be our great wisdom, so to speak of the grace of God, which we see and observe in others, as that they may not be puffed up with any conceit of their own excellences, but see matter of praise and thanksgiving due unto God only, and nothing to themselves. Note, 2. The special and particular graces which St. Paul observed in the Thessalonians: their faith, their love, their hope, together with the evidence of the sincerity of those graces: their faith was a working faith, that is, fruitful in good works; their love was a laborious love, promoting the good of all the saints; and their hope in the Lord Jesus rendered them patient in and under all tribulations for his sake. There is no such way to judge the truth of the inward habits of grace in the heart, as by observing the effects and fruits of that grace in the life: the apostle concluded they had true faith, because a fruitful faith; true love, because a laborious love; a good hope in Christ, because accompanied with patience under the cross of Christ. Note, 3. St. Paul's offices and acts of love performed on the Thessalonians' behalf, namely, thanksgiving and prayer. 1. Thanksgiving, *We give thanks unto God always for you all.* But why, O blessed apostle, art thou so thankful for the graces of God's Holy Spirit wrought in these Thessalonians? For thy own sake, no doubt, as well as theirs; he saw in them an eminent seal of his apostleship, the happy fruit and blessed effect of his ministry among them. This, O! this it was that drew forth his very soul in thanksgivings to God. Learn, That the faithful ministers of Christ rejoice greatly at the sight and appearance of the grace of God in any person, but when they see it in their own people, as the seal of their ministry, and the blessed fruit of their own painful endeavours amongst them, this carries them out into transports of thankfulness; verily, the joy of their hearts is too big to come out at their mouths, they give thanks for such a mercy without ceasing. Yet, 2. He subjoins prayers with his praises, adds supplications to his thanksgivings: *Making mention of you always in my prayers;* to let them know that there was still more grace wanting in them to keep them humble, as well as great grace in them to make him thankful: our prayers for grace must be thankful prayers, or accompanied with thanksgiving; when we pray to God for more grace, we must ever be thankful for what we have

received; and when we return thanks for grace received, we must be earnest and instant with God for further and fresh supplies of grace wanted. Note, 8. The frequency, yea, constancy, of our apostle in performing these duties of prayer and thanksgiving on the behalf of the Thessalonians: *We give thanks to God always for you, remembering you without ceasing, in the sight of God and our Father*: that is, as often as we appear before God our Father, we incessantly pray for you, and constantly praise God on your behalf. Where observe, The comfortable relation in which the saints of God do approach and draw near unto God in prayer: they come to him as a *Father*, yea, as *their Father*; in the sight of God our Father. The Holy Spirit of God vouchsafed to believers under the gospel, enables them to come before him in prayer, with a full assurance of his fatherly affection towards them, as being the sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus, and it enables them to cry, *Abba, Father*; and they are very careful to improve this their relation to God, and interest in him, as a Father, in prayer on behalf of themselves, and all their fellow-brethren and members in Christ. Thus, St. Paul here, *We give thanks for you, and remember you without ceasing, in the sight of God and our Father*.

4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. 5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance: as ye know what manner of men we were amongst you for your sake.

Observe here, 1. One special ground and reason assigned, why the apostle's heart was thus extraordinarily carried out in praise and thanksgivings unto God, on the Thessalonians' behalf, and that was the knowledge of their election. *Knowing your election of God*: that is, knowing certainly and infallibly, by your proficiency in the fore-mentioned Christian graces of faith, love, and hope, that God had certainly chosen you out of the gentile world, to be a church and people to himself, and that it was the good pleasure of God to gather a Christian Church at Thessalonica; and also he did know and believe, with a judgment of charity, that Almighty God had chosen them to eternal life also, to be a part of his church triumphant in heaven, as well as of his church militant upon earth, the preaching of the gospel having met with such visible success amongst them. It is our unquestionable

duty, and we learn it from St. Paul's example, in charity to number those among God's chosen, in whom we see, as much as man may see, the fruits and signs of God's election. Observe, 2. The ground which St. Paul had to build his confidence upon, that the Thessalonians were a people chosen of God; and that was, rational evidence: *Knowing your election of God*; for our gospel came to you not in word only, but in power. Where note, The piety and prudence of St. Paul's charity; it was not weakly grounded and credulous, but guided by reasonable evidence: *Charity hopeth all things*, that is, all things which it hath good ground to hope, but nothing more than what probable evidence may induce it to hope. St. Paul, when he saw the apostasy of Hymeneus and Alexander into error and vice, without censoriousness and uncharitableness, pronounces, that they had *made shipwreck of faith*, 1 Tim. i. 20. For he had sufficient reason to believe, there could be no faith, where there was no holiness. There are a generation of men amongst us, who brand the ministers of God with censoriousness, and rash judging the present state of men, though they judge by their lives and actions; they would have us hope well concerning them, against hope, and judge quite contrary to rational evidence: we must believe them to have faith, when they have knowledge; that they are right penitent and sorrowful for their sins, when they make sport of sin; that their hearts are chaste, when their mouths foam out nothing but filthiness; but let them know, we dare not bring a curse upon ourselves, by calling good evil, or evil good; our charity, though not causelessly suspicious, yet neither is it foolishly blind. Observe, 3. That particular and special evidence which the apostle had of the Thessalonians' election; and that was, the great and gracious success of his ministry amongst them. *Our gospel came*—But how our gospel? Not as if he were the author of it, but the dispenser only; not our gospel by original revelation, but by ministerial dispensation only. But how did the gospel come amongst the Thessalonians? *Not in word only*, sounding in the ear, or reaching or resting in the understanding only, as a light to gaze upon; but in power, that is, accompanied then with the power of miracles, now with a convincing, terrifying, humbling, renewing, and reforming power. It follows, *and in the Holy Ghost*: that is, the preaching of the word was at that time attended, as with a mighty power of miracles, so with an extraordinary effusion and pouring out of the Holy Ghost upon them that heard it,

prevailing upon them to embrace it, and to submit themselves unto it. With this miraculous power of the Holy Ghost was the preaching of the word accompanied *them*, with an enlightening, quickening, regenerating, and sanctifying power *now*; the ministry of the word is the great instrument in the hand of the Spirit, for the conversion of sinners, for the edification of saints, and for the salvation of both. Again, the apostle's ministration came unto them *in much assurance*, that is, with a full conviction both to *them* and *him*; to them, with an evident conviction of the truth of his doctrine; and to him, it was a full persuasion, yea, a firm assurance, that God had chosen them to be a church and special people to himself. And, lastly, As to his own conduct and conversation amongst them, he appeals to them, and to their own knowledge, whether it was not answerable to the doctrine delivered by him: *Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.* Happy is it when the pious and prudent conversation of a minister amongst his people is, and has been such, that upon a fit occasion he can dare appeal to God and them as witnesses and observers of it: *Ye know what we were among you; ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably, we behaved ourselves among you,* chap. ii. 10. An heterodox conversation will carry an orthodox preacher to hell; there is a preaching life, as well as a preaching doctrine; if religion be taught by the first, and irreligion by the latter, we sadly disappoint the end of what is spoken: though, like a cracked bell we may be instrumental to ring others to heaven, yet for ourselves there is no remedy, but to the fire we must go, either for our refining, or for our condemnation. The throne and the pulpit, above all places, call for holiness; the prince and the preacher, above all persons, are most accountable to God for their example: *Ye know what manner of men we were among you.*

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: 7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

In these words, our apostle gives us another probable evidence, that the Thessalonians were undoubtedly chosen of God, namely, because they were active and operative Christians; they did in their life and practice conform themselves to that excellent pattern and example held forth unto them by their preachers, *Ye became*

followers of us. Where note, That there ought to be something worthy of imitation in the lives of ministers, something which their people may safely follow; and it is the people's duty, not only to lend an ear to their doctrine, but an eye to their pious conversation; it is added, *Followers of us, and of the Lord*; followers of Christ, absolutely, as an unerring pattern; of his ministers, conditionally, so far as they followed Christ. But *followers of the Lord* here, seems to import their following of him in his sufferings and afflictions, as appears by the next words, *Having received the word with much affliction.* Such as are sincere and serious Christians, are followers of Christ in his sufferings, as well as in his example; they follow him in the sharp and thorny path of affliction, in which he went before them; they are willing to bear his cross, as well as to wear his crown; to suffer for him, as well as to be glorified with him. Observe next, The particular instance where in the Thessalonians became followers of the apostles; it was this, that they preached the word to them with great desire, delight, and joy, though at the same time they endured a great fight of afflictions, contending with the opposition both of men and devils, in preaching the word unto them: in like manner did they receive the word with much affliction, and adhere to it in the midst of persecution; and all this accompanied with such inward joy, as none but the Holy Ghost could be the author of in them; *Ye received the word with much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.* Learn hence, That upon preaching of the word, to have a heart open to receive it, to receive it with affliction, with much affliction, and yet with joy and rejoicing, with a cheerful spirit, and such a joy as the Holy Spirit of God is the author and producer of, is a good evidence that a person is chosen of God, and has a title to the everlasting inheritance. Observe farther, Our apostle, in a just and deserved commendation of these Thessalonians, tells them, to their great and singular honour, that as they were followers of them (the apostles) in suffering, in patience, and cheerfulness; so they were themselves living patterns and lively ensamples of courage and constancy under their sufferings, to all the neighbouring churches in Macedonia and Achaia. Then is the grace of God received by us a mark and evidence of our election of God, when we have advanced to such a considerable proficiency and growth in it, as to become patterns and examples of piety to all that are round about us. Thus the Thessalonians here, *Ye are become ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.*

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. 9 For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.

Still our apostle proceeds in a copious commendation of these Thessalonians, or rather in a thankful admiration of the grace of God shining in them; he tells them, and that without flattery, that the fame and report of their graces were spread abroad far and near, insomuch that the foreign churches, amongst whom he conversed, were able to give him a perfect account how the apostle's entrance amongst them at Thessalonica was; though not pompous, yet very prosperous, strangely succeeded, and singularly blessed, to the turning of them from dead idols, to serve the living and true God. Learn, That where true grace is rooted in the heart, though it be not immediately seen, yet it cannot long be hid, but it will discover itself in the genuine fruits and vital effects of it, to the deserved admiration, and wished-for imitation of all beholders whatsoever: *From you sounded forth the word of the Lord, &c.* And how you turned from idols, that is, how readily and speedily, how sincerely and heartily, you turned from idolatry, your former idolatry, in which you had been educated and brought up; yet upon the preaching of our gospel ye left it, and turned with indignation from it, to serve God, *the living God*, so called in opposition to their dead and dumb idols; and the *true God*, in opposition to their false gods. These words of the apostle teach us how to expound those words of our Saviour, John xviii. 3. *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God*; teaching us that the Father is called the *only true God*, not in opposition to Jesus Christ, as the Socinians would insinuate, but in opposition to idols and false gods only. Now from this effect, which the gospel had upon the Thessalonians, to turn them from idols to serve the living God, we learn, that as every man naturally bears an idol in his heart, that is, sets up something there in God's stead, which attracts and draws off the chief of his affections from God; so wherever the gospel is heartily received and entertained, there will be an abandoning of, and returning from, whatsoever did usurp God's throne in the soul, and the

person hereafter will only love and serve the living and true God: *You turned from idols, to serve the living and true God.*

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even Jesus*, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Here the apostle produces a further evidence of these Thessalonians' conversion, namely, that they did not only turn from idols to serve God the Father, but did also believe in Jesus Christ his only Son: this act of faith is expressed by *waiting*, they *waited for his Son from heaven*; that is, by faith, they expected that Christ, whom the apostle had preached to them, and was gone to heaven, would certainly come again from thence to deliver his redeemed ones *from the wrath to come*, that is, from the punishment and vengeance eternally due unto them for sin. And the ground of this their expectation was, Christ's resurrection from the dead: *To wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead.* Note here, 1. A description, an heart-affecting, yea, a soul-affecting description of that wrath which doth await every wicked and impenitent sinner; it is a wrath to come: after thousands, yea, millions of years, that sinners have lain under it, still it is a wrath to come: and they are as far from being delivered from it, as the first hour they fell under it. Note, 2. That Jesus Christ delivered up himself to death, that he might be a Saviour and deliverer to his people from this wrath; let it break forth when it will, not a drop of it shall ever fall upon any of them. Note, 3. That believers may warrantably expect deliverance by Christ from this wrath, seeing God has *raised him from the dead*. Note, 4. Therefore may and ought they to wait and wish, to look and long, for his coming from heaven, when deliverance from wrath will be perfected and completed.

CHAP. II.

The design and scope of the apostle, in the chapter now before us, is, to acquaint the Thessalonians with the sincerity and success of his ministry among them; as also to put them in remembrance of his meek deportment towards them, even as a nurse among her children; and from the gracious success which God had given him in his ministerial services for them, he concludes that these his converts to Christianity, the Thessalonians, would certainly be his joy and crown of rejoicing, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

FOR yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain.

Observe here, How our apostle did and

durst appeal to the Thessalonians themselves, as touching the sincerity and success of his public ministry among them: *Ye yourselves know.* It is not sufficient to a minister's comfort, that he be well reported of amongst strangers, for his zeal and diligence, for his sincerity and faithfulness, unless he can and dare appeal to the consciences of his own people, and call them to vouch and bear witness to his integrity: *Ye yourselves know, that our entrance in unto you was not in vain.* Our entrance in unto you, that is, our first preaching amongst you, was not in vain, that is, say some, it was not in vain in the matter, we did not preach about vain, useless, and unprofitable niceties and speculations; but our preaching was substantial, sound, and solid. It was not in vain in the manner, say others: it was not undertaken rashly, and without a call, nor managed in a slight and vain manner. But the word in vain, here seems to point out these two things: 1. That it did not want power and energy, but had the demonstration of divine assistance to confirm them in the faith that heard it, and also those that preached it, in expectation of success. 2. *It was not in vain:* that is, it did not want fruit, it was not without a great and gracious success: for the word vain, when it is applied to the message which the ministers of God bring, signifies the not accomplishing the great ends for which it was designed. Isa. lv. 11. *The word that goeth out of my mouth, shall not return unto me in vain,* but prosper, &c. Hence learn, That where a minister is regularly called to, and faithfully discharges his duty amongst a people, both by public preaching and private instruction, his labours seldom, if ever, want fruit, in some degree or measure, either sooner or later, either manifest or secret, either for conversion or edification. We have the promise of Christ's presence with us, *Matt. xxviii. 20.* And if the fault be not ours, we shall certainly experience it; both the presence of his power to strengthen us, and the presence of his gracious Spirit to succeed us. Possibly we do not see any visible success at present: but this may comfort us, there is more good done by the ministry of the word, than we are aware of; and if we reap not the fruit of the seed we sow, they who come after us may: but if neither they nor we reap fruit, our ministry shall not be in vain, with reference to ourselves; yet shall we be glorious, though Israel be not gathered. But, O! that our people might share in that glory with us, and also shine as the stars, for ever and ever! God grant we may never be called forth by Christ to give a judicial

testimony against any of them at the bar of God, for not believing our report.

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God, with much contention.

Here St. Paul discovers to the Thessalonians the great difficulties and dangers, which he broke through at his first entrance amongst them to preach the gospel, he acquaints them with the reproach and disgrace he underwent at their neighbouring city, Philippi, and the sufferings there endured for the gospel, which are recorded *Acts xvi. 23.* But nothing of that nature could discourage him, but that he rather waxed more bold in spirit, resolving to preach the gospel of God, though with much contention and opposition from the unbelieving Jews.—Where mark, that the apostle calls his boldness, in God, because a boldness for God, and from God. It was not barely the fruit of a natural courage, but it was a zealous boldness in the cause of God, and proved a convincing, as well as a courageous, boldness; it is one necessary requisite and qualification in the ministers of God, in order to the rendering their ministry fruitful and successful, that a wise, humble, zealous, and convincing boldness be found with them in their delivering the truths of God unto their people: *We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God.*

3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: 4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

Here our apostle assigns a subordinate reason why his preaching was so successful amongst the Thessalonians, namely, because it was very sincere. There was both sincerity in the doctrine preached, and also in the preacher of that doctrine. Where note, 1. St. Paul calls his preaching an exhortation; doubtless, because a great part of his preaching was, as ours ought to be, applicatory and exhortatory, earnestly and affectionately exciting the hearers to cleave unto the truths, whether doctrinal or practical, delivered to them. Note, 2. How St. Paul removes from himself the opposites of sincerity, some of which point at the sincerity of the doctrine preached by him: *it was not of deceit, or of ensnaring and seducing error, not suited*

to the corrupt opinions and wicked inclinations of men. *Nor of uncleanness*; nothing that he either preached or practised did countenance and encourage men in their filthy lusts, as did the false preaching of the false apostles, and the Gnostics. *Nor in guile*: this points at the sincerity of his own heart in preaching, his exhortation was not in *guile*; that is, he did not seek himself, under a pretence of acting for God and his glory, nor propound his own worldly advantage as his ultimate end. Learn hence, It is the duty of Christ's ministers, not only to preach the pure word of God, but to preach it purely in simplicity of heart, and with a single eye at God's glory, without looking at, or having any regard unto, base, sinister ends, or by-respects. Note, 3. That St. Paul having vindicated his ministry from all suspicion of insincerity, next assures them of his great uprightness in all his ministerial performances, making it his chief design to approve himself unto God, and to be approved of him, not in the least regarding to *please men*, but only in subordination to God. Note, 4. The arguments or motives inclining him thus, in much sincerity, to approve himself to God in all his ministerial services; namely, 1. The consideration of that high favour and honourable trust which he had received from God: *We were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel*. God did fit him for this trust, and then entrusted him with it, and he looked upon both as a favour and honour from God. 2. The consideration of God's omniscience and all-seeing eye, *Who trieth our hearts*. The apostle well knew, that Almighty God was both a witness of his doctrine and conversation, and also privy to his intentions and purposes, his aim and end, as being a God that searcheth the heart; therefore he so preached, *not as pleasing men, but God*. Learn from both, That nothing doth more effectually constrain the ministers of Christ to the faithful discharge of their whole duty, than the consideration of the honour and weight of that trust which God hath conferred on them, and the remembrance that the eye of an all-seeing and heart-searching God is both upon and within them also. *We so speak, being put in trust with the gospel by God, who trieth our hearts*.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness: 6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

Still our apostle sees fit to proceed in avouching his own sincerity in preaching the gospel, and disowning all flattery, covetousness, and vain-glory, to have any influence upon him in the discharge of his ministerial trust. First, *He used not flattering words*, that is, speeches fitted to gratify the lusts and humours of men, or for gaining their favour, or courting their good opinion. Flattery in any is odious, in a minister 'tis monstrous; both because spiritual men ought to be most plain-hearted, and also because flattery about spiritual things is most fatal and pernicious, both to the giver and receiver. Secondly, *he used not a cloak of covetousness*, that is, he had no covetous design in his ministry; his great end, in that administration, was not worldly or outward advantage to himself; and because a covetous design is secret, and man cannot judge of it, he appeals solemnly to God that searcheth the heart, as a witness of his freedom from that design: *I used no flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness*. As if he had said, "Had I used flattering words, you might witness it; but I could have worn a cloak of covetousness so closely that you could not have seen it, but God could; he can judge through the darkest cloud, and see through the thickest cloak and covering; but I appeal to him, whether I have put on such a cloak, or no." An oath, then, is lawful to a Christian; he may solemnly appeal to God, and call him to witness the truth of what he speaks, in and upon a just and great occasion; thus St. Paul here, by oath, purges himself of covetousness of spirit. Thirdly, *He purges himself from all ostentation and vain-glory*; he tells them plainly, he did not hunt after applause from others, nor sought so much as due respect in a fitting maintenance from themselves, though herein he assures them that he did remit of his right; seeing, as an apostle of Christ, he might have been *burdensome*, that is, chargeable to them, by exacting maintenance from them. Learn, 1. Though every man may (much more a minister) have a due respect to his own honour and just reputation, yet to hunt after respect and esteem, and to seek it with the full bent of our desire, doth savour of vanity and vain-glory. Learn, 2. Though the ministers of the gospel have an undoubted right to an honourable maintenance, yet it may be a pious prudence in them, at a particular time, to remit their right; and when they do so with an eye at the glory of God, and the advantage of the gospel, God will recompense it to them.

7 But we were gentle among you,

even as a nurse cherisheth her children: 6 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

St. Paul having cleansed himself and his ministry, in the foregoing verses, from the charge and imputation of those foul vices of flattery, fraud, and covetousness, which the false teachers were guilty of, he next gives an account of his holy and humble, meek and gentle, courteous and affable, behaviour amongst them, performing all duties towards them from a principle of tender love, even such as is found in a nurse to her babe, which makes her stoop to the meanest offices for it: *We were gentle among you, as a nurse*, not an hired nurse, but a mother-nurse, who takes nothing for nursing, who bestows all her time and pains in nursing, who draws forth her breasts, and gives down her milk with pleasure to her nursing, lodging it in her bosom, carrying it in her arms, with all possible demonstrations of a tender affection towards it, especially bearing with its frowardness and manifold infirmities; intimating to us with what tenderness of affection a minister should be devoted to his people, bearing with them, and forbearing of them, and exercising all that indulgence towards them, which may mutually endear them to each other. Observe farther, Our apostle having resembled himself, in general, to a nurse cherishing her children, next instances, in particular, wherein he stood ready to express, like a nurse, his indulgent care over them. Thus, 1. As the nursing-mother, if she be but a short time absent from her children, doth most vehemently long to see them, and draws forth her breast towards them with the utmost desire and delight; in like manner, was our now absent apostle most affectionately desirous of seeing and enjoying his beloved Thessalonians. 2. As the nursing-mother, when she gets to the child, with unspeakable delight feeds it with her own blood, concocted and turned into milk: so was the apostle desirous to impart, not the gospel only, but *his own soul*, that is, his life; implying, how ready he was to seal the gospel with his blood, and to confirm the Thessalonians in the faith of Christ. 3. As a moving, impelling, and impulsive cause, of the nurse's indulgent care and indefatigable pains, is pure love, motherly affections, and no hope of gain; so was likewise the case of St. Paul here towards these Thessalonians: *We were willing to impart unto you*

our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. Learn hence, That there is no stronger love nor more endeared affection between any relations upon earth, than between those ministers of Christ, and their beloved people, whom they have been instrumental to convert to God.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: For labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. 10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

Notwithstanding our apostle was free, wholly free, from all shadow and appearance of covetousness in the whole course of his ministry, yet it may seem as if some persons (probably the false apostles) did, though with the highest injustice, charge him with it; accordingly, to clear himself from that imputation, here he tells the Thessalonians, he laboured night and day in the business of his calling; making tents to maintain himself, that so he might not be chargeable or burdensome to any of them, or any ways retard or hinder the success of the gospel amongst them: *Labouring night and day, that we might not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God freely.* Yet observe, This was only a case of necessity; for at other times, and in other places, we find our apostle asserting his own right, and God's appointment, that every one that preacheth the gospel should *live of the gospel*, 1 Cor. ix. 14. Next our apostle calls upon them to *remember his labour and travail*, that is, his pains and diligence in preaching the gospel; the words signify labour unto weariness, and labour after weariness, his painfulness both in his preaching and in his secular calling; and from his calling upon the Thessalonians to remember this, he learns us this lesson of instruction, namely, that it is the standing duty of a people to keep in their constant remembrance the great labour and pains which the faithful ministers of Christ do take amongst them, that so they may be duly thankful both to God and them; and put a just value upon that spiritual good, which at any time they have experienced and received from them: *Remember, brethren, our labour and travail.* Observe again, Having asserted his labouriousness in preaching to them, he next puts them in remembrance of his exemplariness in conversation amongst them, how *holily*,

justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves amongst you, that is, performing his duty with great integrity and uprightness towards God and man, so that none justly could blame him for neglect amongst them; and for the truth of this he appeals to God as a judge, and to themselves as witnesses, *Ye are witnesses, and God also.* Learn hence, That it is a great happiness, and unspeakable consolation, both to ministers and people, when the duties of religion, relating to both tables, are performed with such exactness, that they can and dare appeal to one another, as to their holy and unblameable conversation, and to God himself, as to the purity of their aim and sincerity of intention.

11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father *doth* his children, 12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory..

Observe, That still our apostle appeals to their own consciences for his good behaviour amongst them: *Ye know.* Happy minister, that has a throne in the consciences of his people, unto which he can and dare at all times appeal, for the clearing of his innocency and integrity in and before the face of the whole world! Observe next, that having compared himself to a nurse before, he resembles himself to a father now: *We exhorted you, as a father doth his children.* As it is the office of a father to direct and instruct, to counsel and exhort his children; so the apostle did exhort, comfort, and charge the Thessalonians; that they be strictly conscientious in the faithful discharge of their whole duty, both to God and man, and patient under all, and all manner of trials and afflictions whatsoever, which they did or might meet with in the way of well-doing. Where note, That a mixture of meekness and gentleness, accompanied with authority and gravity, is an excellent composition in the ministers of the gospel: St. Paul having shown, that for gentleness he was a nursing-mother, declareth here, that for authority and gravity he was an instructing father. Observe lastly, The great duty which he did direct them in, and exhort them to, to *walk worthy of God, who had called them unto his kingdom and glory.* Note here, 1. The duty exhorted to, namely, to *walk worthy of God*; How so? Not with a worthiness of merit, but with a worthiness of meetness; to walk as becomes them who profess the name of God, who bear the image of God, answerable to the high

and holy privileges received from God. Note, 2. The reason or argument enforcing the duty, *He hath called you to his kingdom and glory*, that is, to grace; and by grace here to glory hereafter: such as are called to the one, are called to both: grace is a certain pledge and earnest of glory, a low degree of glory, and glory the highest degree of grace. Such as walk worthy of God now, shall live with him ere long to eternal ages.

13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. 14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews;

Our apostle's great design in this chapter, being to set forth the wonderful success which the preaching of the gospel had among the Thessalonians, and also to assign the causes of that success, he having in the former verses given the reason of this success on his own part, namely, his sincerity in preaching it, and his pious conversation in all things suitable to it, now he comes to show the reason on their part, with all thankfulness to Almighty God for the same: first they heard it; secondly, they received it; thirdly, they examined it, and found it no fable, but the word of God, and, as such, entertained it with a divine faith; fourthly, the word thus received did work with a mighty power and efficacy in them that believed, that is, was accompanied with miracles, and miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit, *then* to confirm them in the faith of what they did believe; and the word has also *now* an efficacious energy and divine efficacy accompanying it in the hearts of believers, working upon the will, not in a way of compulsion, but in a way congruous to the nature and liberty of the will, by a divine influx, *Tollendo resistantiam, non voluntatis libertatem*, (as the great St. Austin speaks). Observe next, St. Paul further proves the efficacious success which the word had amongst the Thessalonians, from their constancy and patience under the sharpest sufferings for the word's sake; *Ye have suffered like things of your own countrymen: as if he had said, "You of the Christian*

church in Thessalonica have shown yourselves like to the Christian churches in Judea, in patient suffering of persecution from your friends and kinsfolks, from your countrymen and fellow-citizens, as they did from the unbelieving Jews. Note thence, That where the word is efficaciously received, it makes the embracer of it endure the hardest trials and sufferings rather than renounce it. Note, 2. That there neither is, nor can be, any better evidence that the word of God is effectually received, than when it enables Christians to bear afflictions, and undergo persecutions, with Christian courage and holy resolution: *Ye have suffered like things.* But of whom? *Of your own countrymen at Thessalonica*, as the churches in Judea did of the Jews. Learn thence, That such is the fury of a persecuting spirit, that when men are judicially given up of God unto it, they will break all bonds, both natural, civil, and religious, and turn barbarous and savage, like wolves and tigers, towards those of their own flesh, who dare not deny the truth, which they persecute and oppose. Here the churches in Judea and Thessalonica, were persecuted alike by their own countrymen,—*Ye have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews.*

15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men; 16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins away; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Our apostle's design being to encourage the Thessalonians to patience and constancy under the persecutions for Christianity, he acquaints them, that they did not walk alone in this thorny path, but that Jesus Christ, the prophets, and apostles, went before them, and every step they took in it was up to the knees in blood: *They killed the Lord Jesus, &c.* Where observe, The bitter and bloody persecution which the Jews were guilty of, *They killed the Lord Jesus*, and before him their own prophets; called their own, because of their own nation, and sent with a peculiar message to them; and now they persecuted, banished, and drove away St. Paul, and the rest of the apostles; *they pleased not God*, that is, they highly displeased him, dreadfully provoked him, they were haters of God, hateful to him; now hated of him, and lastly, rejected by him; *contrary to all men*, that is, to the common interest of all men, by en-

deavouring to obstruct the preaching of the gospel, which bringeth salvation to all men; *forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles*, that is, to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and consequently obstructing, what in them lay, the salvation almost of all the world; *filling up the measure of their sins*, till at last the wrath of God came upon them to the utmost, in their judicial obduration, and the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; after which the Jews have been no more a people, but scattered abroad through the face of the earth. From the whole learn, 1. That it is a singular support to suffering saints to consider, that Christ and his apostles suffered before them; and by his sufferings has sanctified a state of affliction and persecution to them. Learn, 2. That a spirit of persecution seems oft-times to run in a blood, and passes from parent to child, through many generations. Persecution became, as it were, hereditary, and, in a sort, transient from one generation to another among the Jews; they killed Christ, stoned the prophets, and persecuted the apostles. Note, 3. How St. Paul ranks and reckons them that are enemies to the preaching of the gospel, with the obstinate shedders of Christ's blood; they are enrolled amongst the capital enemies of mankind: *They killed the Lord of life; forbidding us to preach to the Gentiles*; such as are enemies to preaching are enemies to the souls of men. *Obj.* But what need so much preaching amongst us, who are converted from heathenism to Christianity? *Ans.* It is one thing to be converted from heathenism to Christianity, and another thing to be converted from sin to God. *Obj.* But we have the Bible for that end, and can make no use of that. *Ans.* Observe it, and you will find, that such as are no friends to the pulpit, are usually none of the best friends to the Bible: follow them to their families, how doth the Bible lie by as a neglected book amongst them: and it must be a large charity, that can judge it is conscientiously used in a closet, when it is carelessly neglected in the family.

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. 18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

Observe here, That St. Paul having all along, in the chapter before us, compared himself to a tender father, and a nursing-mother, for his affectionate love unto, and

his solicitous concern for, these Christian converts; he doth in the words before us, declare, that his constrained absence from them, occasioned him no less grief than that of a tender father, when bereft of his beloved children; or that of an indulgent mother, when the child she loves as her own soul is taken violently from her; *We, brethren, being taken from you*; the words intimate such a separation as death makes between a father and a child, which rends the parent's heart in sunder, and is like cutting off a limb or member from his body, exquisitely painful; intimating, that the enforced absence of a pastor from his beloved people, though but for a short season, is very afflictive. Ah! how heart-rending then is a total and final separation from each other, occasioned either by natural or civil death! Observe, 2. St. Paul tells them, that though persecutors had deprived them of his bodily presence, yet not of his heart, for though not in body, yet in mind he was present with them: ministers and people, like true lovers, are present with each other in soul, when separated in body. It is a singular comfort to Christians under persecution, that their enemies can neither deprive them of the presence of God, nor the prayers of their faithful ministers; their prayers may meet, when their persons are distant, and they may be present in spirit, in heart, and affection, when at the ends of the earth. Observe, 3. How he expresses his desire and endeavour, his fervent purpose and fixed resolution, to come unto them, to see their face, to refresh them, and be refreshed by them: *I endeavoured abundantly to see your face, but Satan hindered*; that is, his instruments, persecutors, lay in wait for him on the one hand, and caused some dissensions in other churches, which detained him from coming to them, on the other hand: *Satan hindered*. Learn hence, That such as obstruct the preaching and propagating of the gospel, and persecute the promoters of it, are Satan's instruments and ministers. 2. That such as do Satan's work, it is fit they should bear his name. 3. Thus, Rev. ii. 13. *The devil shall cast some of you into prison*, that is, his servants: it is fit that master and servant should have both one name.

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? 20 For ye are our glory and joy.

Here, in the close of the chapter, St. Paul acquaints the Thessalonians with the true reason why he had such an endear-

ing affection for them, and such a fervent desire to be present with them: they were his *hope*, his *joy*, his *crown of rejoicing*; that is, they were then the cause of his hope; not the ground and foundation of his hope: that Christ alone was; but their conversion by his ministry was, in concurrence with other things, a good ground of hope concerning his own salvation; ye are now my *hope*, my *joy*, and *crown of rejoicing*. Where note, A very remarkable gradation in the words; he calls them his *hope*, his *joy*, and his *crown of rejoicing*. His hope, that is, the matter of his hope, that they should be saved; his joy, that is, the occasion of his joy, in their conversion by his ministry; and his crown of rejoicing in Christ's presence at his coming, that is, the fruit and success of his ministry amongst them would add to his crown, and redound to his glory, in the day of Christ. Learn hence, 1. That there are degrees of glory in heaven, probably according to the measures and degrees of service we have done for God on earth; there is, no doubt, an equality of glory there, as to the essentials, but not with respect to the accidentals; besides the joy and satisfaction which the ministers of Christ are partakers of, in heaven, in common with other glorified saints, they have an additional joy and glory from the success of their pious and painful labours, which God has crowned with the conversion and edification of many souls. Lord! who could not study, spend, and be spent in the service of such a master? Is it not worth all our labour and sufferings, to appear in the presence of Christ, accompanied with all those souls whom we have instrumentally either brought home or built up in the most holy faith, either converted, comforted, or confirmed in the way to heaven? To hear one spiritual child say, "Lord, this is the instrument by whom I believed;" another, "This is the minister by whom I was established;" a third, "This is he that quickened me by his example, and provoked me to love, and to good works. O blessed be God that I ever saw his face, and heard his voice!" But, Lord! what will it be to hear thy blessed voice saying to us, "*Well done good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of me your Lord!*" I have kept an exact account of all your fervent prayers for your people, of all your instructive and persuasive sermons, of all your sighs and groans poured forth before me on behalf of those whom you would have persuaded to be happy but could not. Every tear from your eye, and drop of sweat from your face shall now meet with eterna-

recompense; you shall now find me, according to my promise, not *unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.*" O what a master do the ministers of Christ serve! Who would not sacrifice all that is dear for him, who has the assurance of such an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory* from him! Learn, 2. That the saints of God in heaven will know one another there: why else doth St. Paul here comfort himself, that these Thessalonians, whom he converted to Christ, would be his crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ! Surely this must needs suppose and imply his distinct knowledge of them, in that day; if he did not know them, how could he rejoice in them! Doubtless we may allow, in that state, all that knowledge which is accumulative and perfective, whatever may heighten our felicity and increase our satisfaction, as this must needs be allowed to do. Lord, make us faithful to the death, faithful to thee, faithful to our own souls, faithful to our own people; and then, as they are now our hope and joy, so will they be our *crown of rejoicing in the presence of the Lord Jesus at his coming.* Amen.

CHAP. III.

The design of our apostle in this, is the same with that of the foregoing chapter; namely, to give the Thessalonians the highest assurance possible of his affectionate regard unto them, of his solicitous care and concern for them, and of his utmost endeavours to confirm and settle them in the faith of Christ, what afflictions and persecutions soever it might expose them to; and accordingly he thus bespeaks them:

WHEREFORE, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone: 2 And send Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

At the latter end of the foregoing chapter, St. Paul acquainted the Thessalonians with his desires and intentions to come once and again unto them, but was always providentially hindered. Now here he gives them to understand, that such was the fervour of his affection towards them, that although he could not come, yet he could not forbear to send to them, though he left himself alone, preferring their necessity before his own convenience: *When we could no longer forbear*; that is, "When I could no longer satisfy myself without knowing your state and condition, I chose, though with much inconvenience to myself, rather to be left at Athens alone, in

the midst of my afflictions and tribulations, than that you should be longer destitute of one to supply my absence, in order to your confirmation and comfort." See here a special instance of ministerial love and affection in St. Paul, preferring the church's good before his own comfort, and postponing his own convenience to their necessity; though Timothy's company was very desirable, very necessary and useful for him, yet he denies himself, to serve them: *We thought it good to be left at Athens alone.* Observe, 2. The person sent by him, Timothy with his deserved character and commendation, a brother, that is, a Christian, a believer, a brother in Christ; a minister of God, that is a preacher of the gospel; his fellow-labourer, or one that joined heart and hand with him in the preaching of the gospel from place to place. See here a special instance of St. Paul's apostolical care for the churches of Christ; when he could not visit them in person, he sends to them, not any one he could come at, but the fittest he could get, one who was most likely, through God's assistance and blessing, to carry on the work he was sent about: *I sent you Timotheus, my brother.* Observe, 3. The great end for which he was sent unto them: it was to confirm them, and to comfort them: to confirm them in the faith of Christ, and to comfort them under all their sufferings for the sake of Christ. The strongest faith needs confirmation and establishment; and it is the minister's duty, in trying times especially, to guard his people's faith, upon the stability whereof their strength and safety doth depend.

3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

As if the apostle had said, "One great end why I have sent Timothy among you, is this, lest either upon the account of your own afflictions or my sufferings, you should be moved from your steadfastness, either drawn away by fraud and flattery, or driven away by force and terror: *That no man be moved by these afflictions.* Observe, also, The argument to confirm them in the faith, amidst all their sufferings and afflictions; and that is drawn from the pleasure and purpose, the ordination and appointment, of God concerning their afflictions: *Ye yourselves know, that we are thereunto appointed.* Learn hence, 1. That the best of saints are subject to be moved by their afflictions. 2. That it is the high commendation of a Christian, not to stir or be moved from his steadfastness by the

heaviest shock of affliction that may fall upon him: *That no man may be moved by these afflictions.* Some render the word appointed, set as a mark to be shot at; some saints, with holy Job, are set on purpose as a mark for the arrow of affliction to be levelled at, yet then are they to keep their ground, and stand immovable: we honour God abundantly, when we are immovable in our active obedience; and we glorify him eminently, when we are immovable in our passive obedience; when we stand to it in the midst of sufferings, and are no more moved either by cowardice or impatience than a post that is shot at. This is the glory of a Christian, and his great duty; and it is the glory of God, and his certain due. Learn, 3. That believers are under a divine appointment, from God himself, to undergo trouble and affliction. The ultimate destination of believers, is to rest, (God hath not appointed them unto wrath, but to obtain salvation.) But the intermediate destination of them is to trouble and affliction, in order unto rest, and to prepare them for that rest. Seeing then that afflictions are appointed to us, and we appointed to them, seeing there is a decree of God concerning them, a decree as to the matter of them, as to the manner of them, as to the measure of them, so to the time of them, when they shall commence, how far they shall advance, how long they shall continue, seeing every thing in affliction is under an appointment; how meek and humble, how patient and submissive, ought the Christian's spirit to be under them! and with what steadiness of expectation may and ought he to look up to heaven for a sanctified use and improvement of them! Let no man be moved by afflictions, knowing we are appointed thereunto.

4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

Our apostle informed the Thessalonians, in the foregoing verse, with the purpose and decree of God concerning the afflictions which were before them; in this verse he appeals to themselves, as to his own sincerity, in acquainting them, at their first conversion, that they must, through many tribulations, enter into the kingdom of God; and it came to pass accordingly: *When we were with you, says the apostle, we told you before it came to pass, that we should suffer tribulation, and it shortly after came to pass as we told you.* Learn hence, That it is the duty of the ministers of Christ to give timely warning of, and to acquaint young

converts early with, the pleasure of God to exercise all that belong to him with the cross, with a variety of afflictions, trials, and sufferings, before they come, that so they may not stumble nor be offended at them when they come. The sincerity of our apostle is here very remarkable; when he came first to preach the gospel at Thessalonica, he did not flatter them with the expectation of an earthly paradise of pleasure, but told them plainly that christianity had a cross attending it, that a suffering hour would come, and they must expect it: *When we were with you, we told you that we should suffer tribulation.* Learn, 2. That when christians have had timely notice from the ministers of God, and from the word of God, of approaching trials and troubles, before they come, they ought to fore-arm themselves, and not to faint or sink under them when they come, much less to forsake religion because of them, but to continue steadfast, knowing that the heavier the cross is, the weightier will the crown be; for affliction, there is glory; for light affliction, a weight of glory; and for light affliction, which is but for a moment, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. 6 But now, when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you;

Observe here, 1. One special end why St. Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica, it was to know their faith; that is, their constancy in the faith; for he had a fear upon him, lest Satan the tempter had taken occasion, from the present persecution they were under, to turn them from christianity; and that by their yielding to his temptation, and apostatizing from the faith, his labour in the gospel had been in vain amongst them. Here note, That the saints' persecutions are called temptations, and ascribed to Satan the tempter, who, by his ministers and instruments, endeavours to hinder the progress of the gospel, and by persecutions to terrify and turn men from the profession of it. Note further, That there is a holy jealousy in the minds of the faithful ministers of Christ, who, though they hope the best, yet are apt to fear the worst, with reference to the poor people, lest they should run in vain, and labour

in vain amongst them; for though their labour shall not be in vain, with respect to themselves, their reward is with the Lord; (the careful nurse shall be paid, though the child dies at the breast;) yet, with respect to their people, they may be in vain, yea, worse, for a testimony against them, St. Mark vi. 11. Observe, 2. How happily the apostle's fear was prevented, touching these Thessalonians, by the return of Timothy, and the good tidings which he carried along with him, of the steadfastness of their faith, of the fervency of their charity, and of their particular respect to himself, having always remembrance of him in their prayers, and making a respectful mention of his ministerial labours and diligence, and this always when they had occasion to speak of him. And, lastly, By their passionate and impatient desire to see him; (so much the original word signifies;) to which he adds, that his desire was no less ardent to see them, though the providence of God had hitherto hindered him. Learn hence, That the best tidings which can be brought to the ear of a faithful minister of Jesus Christ is this, That his people are sound and steadfast in the faith, maintainers of charity, and promoters of good works, and do account highly of, and honourably esteem, the ministers and ambassadors of Jesus Christ; *Timothy brought us good tidings of your faith, charity, and kind remembrance of us.* Learn farther, From the Thessalonians' fervent desire to see St. Paul, and he to see them, that Christian love doth earnestly long to evidence itself in Christian fellowship, and passionately desires the communion of saints, for the mutual comfort and spiritual advantage of each other: the sweetest privilege, next to communion with God, is communion with his saints. O! what a pleasure is it, to behold the beautiful and blessed graces of the Holy Spirit of God, sparkling and shining in each other, exciting and quickening one another, acquainting each other with their experiences, and making known to each other their griefs, their doubts, and fears; no wonder then that the Thessalonians desired so passionately to see St. Paul, and he as earnestly to see them.

7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you, in all our affliction and distress by your faith: 8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. 9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

In these words our apostle declares the transcendent joy and overflowing comfort which was found in his soul, upon the knowledge he had received of the constancy and steadfastness of the faith of these Thessalonians: *We were comforted in our afflictions by your faith.* Of all comforts which the people of God can afford to the ministers of the gospel, there is none comparable with that which results from their unfainting perseverance in the faith, and the unblameable holiness of their life. No comfort can be greater than our people's gracious demeanour; this put a kind of new life into St. Paul, in the midst of all the sorrows and sufferings, the afflictions and persecutions, he underwent. *Now we live,* says he, *if ye stand fast in the Lord,* that is, a life of joy and comfort; or *we live,* that is, it will be a mean to prolong our life, as well as to add to the comfort of it; and the contrary tends to the shortening of our days. Those that do impair the cheerfulness of their minister's lives, such as deaden their spirits, and break their hearts, by their obstinate non-compliance with the rules of the gospel, are no better than murderers in the account of God. If ministers may, as all other persons do, value their lives by the joy and comfort of them, then may they say, with the great apostle, "*We live,* as we see any of our people *stand fast in the Lord;* and we die, as we see others stick fast in their sins." Observe farther, How highly thankful the apostle was to God, and what unspeakable praise he renders to him, for administering to him this occasion of joy, by the constancy and perseverance of the Christian faith at Thessalonica: *What thanks can we render to God for you, and for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes?* The faithful ministers of Christ think that their hearts can never sufficiently be carried forth in thankfulness to God, for the success of their labours in the lives of their people: *What thanks can we render?* As if he had said, "I can never be sufficiently thankful, or I can never fully express my thankfulness, to God for this honour, this favour, this benefit, that any soul should be brought home to God by my ministry, much more that a Christian church should be planted by my endeavours at Thessalonica; and that God should keep them steady and steadfast in shaking times, and support them under such persecutions and trials as would shock an ordinary patience and constancy of mind: O! what thanks can I render to God for this joy?"

10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and

might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.

Observe here, How abounding St. Paul was in the duty of prayer for the Thessalonians: his prayer was assiduous and constant, *night and day*; it imports frequency and constancy in performance of the duty, *Luke iii. 37*. His prayer also was very fervent and affectionate, *praying exceedingly*; excessively, as the word will bear. Spiritual affections are strong and vehement. Note here, the admirable pattern which St. Paul sets before all the bishops and pastors of the church to the end of the world, namely, to be much, very much, in prayer; to abound in this duty. Observe farther, The subject matter of St. Paul's prayer: *That he might see their face, and perfect what was yet lacking in their faith*. Here note, That St. Paul's short stay among the Thessalonians, when he first planted the gospel, did not permit so full and complete an explication of the matters and mysteries of Christianity, as the apostle did desire: he therefore prays that God would bring him again amongst them, that he might supply what was wanting in their faith, that he might increase their knowledge, confirm their faith, inflame their love, excite their desires, quicken their endeavors, and carry on that good work to perfection in them, of which God had laid the foundation by him. Learn hence, 1. That even in the faith of the most renowned, as well as the new converted Christians, there is some deficiency and defect. 2. That one great end of the ministry of the word is, to help faith forward towards perfection; that which was the instrument to beget faith, is also the mean of increasing and confirming it, namely, the ordinances of God in general, and the ministry of the word in particular. As faith cometh by hearing, so it is confirmed by hearing also: *Longing to see your face, that we might perfect what is lacking in your faith*.

11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

Observe here, 1. An implicit acknowledgment that our journeys intended, and visits designed, to be given to our friends, are not in our power, but under the direction of God: we cannot visit a friend when we please, but when God will give us leave; we are not at our own disposal, but God's. Accordingly here, St. Paul begs of God to direct his way unto them, that all obstacles and impediments being removed, the providence of God might direct him, as in a right line unto them, as

the original word imports. Observe, 2. The persons whom he directs his prayers to, for this mercy: to God and Christ. Where note, That Christ is invocated as well as the Father, he is therefore God as well as the Father; because this invocation of him by all persons, proves him omniscient, searching the hearts of men, and also omnipresent, being with his people in all places; and consequently proves our Lord Jesus Christ to be truly and undeniably God.

12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

Still our apostle perseveres in prayer, on the behalf of his beloved Thessalonians; and the particular mercy he prays for, is, their abundant increase in the grace and duty of love, first amongst themselves and their fellow-brethren in Christ, all Christians far and near; next towards all men, heathens and infidels, their bitter and bloody persecutors not excepted. Where note, The true property of Christian love; it is, 1. A brotherly affection, which every true Christian chiefly bears to all his fellow-members in Christ, for grace sake; 2. A gracious propensity of heart, which a Christian bears for God's sake to all mankind, whereby he wills, and to his power procures, all good for them.

13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

Here a particular and special reason is assigned, why he prayed so fervently for their abounding in love, namely, in order to their establishment in *faith and holiness*; teaching us, that as true love evidences the co-existence of all graces, so it gives stability and establishment to all graces. Learn hence, 1. That growth in grace is accompanied with stability *both in faith and holiness*. 2. That a general and abounding charity, being that by which we become most like unto God, tends exceedingly to our establishment in all grace, and renders us *unblameable before God*, at the appearance of Christ. Learn, 3. That there will be no possibility of appearing *unblameable before Christ at his coming*, without the love and practice of universal holiness in our Christian course. Learn, 4. That the perfecting of a saint's graces, and rendering him altogether unblameable, without spot or imperfection in grace and holiness, is reserved

till Christ's coming. Then, and not till then, shall our holiness be perfected, our love improved to a seraphim's likeness, all burning; then shall we obey with vigour, praise with cheerfulness, delight in God above measure, fear him without torment, trust him without despondency, serve him without lassitude and weariness, without interruption or distraction, and be perfectly like unto him, as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality.

*Come, then, Lord, down to me,
Or take me up to thee.*

CHAP. IV.

Our apostle having, in the three foregoing chapters, exhorted the Thessalonians earnestly to contend for, and courageously to persevere in, that holy doctrine of faith which he had preached to them, and planted amongst them, notwithstanding all the storms of persecution raised against them by the unbelieving Jews and opposing Gentiles; he comes now, in the remaining part of this Epistle, to recommend to them several duties and graces, with which, as with so many jewels of invaluable price, they were to adorn their Christian conversation; and accordingly he thus bespeaks them, in the chapter now before us, ver. 1.

FURTHERMORE, then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

In these words, we have a general exhortation given to the Thessalonians, That according to the doctrine and injunctions formerly given them for a holy conversation suitable to the gospel, they would make it their care and endeavour to abound more and more in the exercise of piety, and outstrip themselves in doing their duty towards God and one another: *We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, &c.* Where note, 1. With what great condescension and earnestness St. Paul applies himself to them: he styles them his brethren, and exhorts and beseeches them. The ministers of Christ must not only be teachers, but beseechers also, meekly and affectionately entreating persons to be kind to themselves, and comply with their present duty. Yet observe, 2. With what authority he backs his entreaty: he beseeches and exhorts *by the Lord Jesus*, that is, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by his authority, and for his sake; so that he that despiseth the gentle exhortations of Christ's ministers, despiseth not man, but God; as the authority of a prince is despised, when his messages by his ambassadors are rejected. Note, 3. The general and compre-

hensive duty which they are exhorted to, namely, to walk so as to please God in their daily conversation, to be found in the practice of all the duties and virtues of a good life. Where note, That St. Paul, in the course of his ministry, did not only explain and unfold gospel mysteries, but urge and enforce moral duties: *Ye have received of us how ye ought to walk.* This must be a minister's care, to acquaint his people, that as the privileges of Christianity are very great, so the duties it requires are strict and exact; and those which we call moral duties, are an integral part of our religion; he that is not a moral man, is no Christian; let us preach and press second-table duties, with arguments drawn from the first, namely, that they be performed in humble obedience to the command of God, and with a single eye at the glory of God, and from an inward principle of love to God, and then we can never preach up morality too much, nor our people practice it too much. Observe, lastly, The apostle exhorts them to abound more and more, that is, in grace and holiness: Christians are to be thankful for, but not satisfied with, their present measures of grace received; God allows us liberty to enlarge our desires after an abundance of his grace; and happy is it where there is found an holy covetousness going along with the grace of God, as there is an insatiable covetousness going with the gold and treasure of this world. This, says the apostle here, will please God, *when ye abound more and more.*

2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

Here our apostle subjoins a reason, to enforce his foregoing exhortation: what he now required of them, was nothing but what at their first conversion to Christianity he had commanded them, and that in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, to be performed by them; so that they were not his commands, but Christ's by him, and as such to be esteemed of them. Learn hence, That the instructions and rules for an holy life, laid down by the apostles before the churches, are to be looked upon as the commandments of Christ, as being dictated by his Spirit, and delivered by his authority, and as such to be received of them, and obeyed by them.

3 For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: **4** That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and

honour; 5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

*This is the will of God, even your sanctification; that is, this is the will of God, eminently and emphatically revealed in his word, that Christians should be holy and pure, chaste and clean, not indulging themselves in those impure and filthy lusts of the flesh, fornication, and all manner of uncleanness, which the Gentiles, who knew not the true God savingly, were addicted to, and in a most beastly manner guilty of; but that every one should know how to possess and make use of his body, and all its members, as the vessel and instrument of the soul, in holiness and honour. Observe here, 1. How the apostle descends from general to particular duties; he exhorted the Thessalonians, ver. 1. in the general, to walk so as to please God; here he exhorteth them, in particular, to purity and chastity, both of heart and life, and to watch against all the violent eruptions of concupiscence in their earthly members; teaching us, that the ministers of God must not satisfy themselves with giving general exhortations to a good life, but must treat of particular sins and duties, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and reclaim them from the other; thus doth our apostle here. Observe, 2. The particular duty exhorted to, sanctification; a comprehensive word, and of large extent. In the general it consists in a conformity of our natures to the nature of God, and in a conformity of our lives to the will of God. In particular, sanctification here stands in opposition to all bodily uncleanness, as the next words do plainly show, *That ye should abstain from fornication*, that is, all filthiness and uncleanness contrary to chastity: intimating to us, that as there are no sins that human nature is more inclined to, than the lusts of the flesh; so there are no sins that a Christian should more guard against, and strive to mortify and subdue, as being contrary to that purity of nature and life which the gospel directs, and the Holy Spirit assists unto. Observe, 3. The argument which our apostle here uses to enforce his exhortation to purity and holiness: *This is the will of God*; it is both the command of God that we should be holy, and the will of God to make us holy; now the signification of God's will ought to be a sufficient inducement to us to desire it, and endeavour after it. *This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.* Observe, 4. The remedy prescribed*

against all bodily uncleanness, and that is, a careful preserving the vessel of the body free from all fleshly pollution, and in that measure of purity and chastity which is suitable to the honour put upon it by God, in being made a temple for the Holy Ghost. *That every one should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.* Where note, The title given to our body, it is called a vessel: it is, first, the Spirit's vessel, he resides in it as in his temple; and accordingly it seems to be an allusion to the consecrated vessels of the temple, in which a more than ordinary cleanness and purity was found. Secondly, it is the soul's vessel, it is its vessel or receptacle, in which for a time it is preserved; and it is the instrument of the soul, by which it acts and performs its office and function. Now it is every person's, every man and woman's duty, to possess their body, and to be masters of it; not to be possessed by it, or enslaved to it, but to keep it in subjection to, and as the instrument of, the soul: the body is God's curious workmanship, it is Christ's precious purchase, it is the soul's receptacle, it is the Holy Ghost's temple; therefore to be kept holy, pure, and clean, like the consecrated vessels of the temple. Observe, 5. Our apostle exhorts the Thessalonians not only to abstain from the outward act of uncleanness, but to mortify and subdue the inward *lusts of concupiscence*, ver. 5. or as the word signifies, the feverish fit, or violent passion, of burning desire, which boileth within through all the members of the body without. There is a divine art in the exercises of chastity, and no small skill required to keep a man's soul and body free from fleshly uncleanness: in order to which inordinate desires must be resisted, the outward senses guarded, enticing and ensnaring objects avoided, wanton company declined, meat, drink, and sleep, soberly used, our lawful callings diligently followed, the first motions to uncleanness suppressed, prayer to God renewed; and, if these prevail not, marriage, God's special remedy, holily made use of. Thus many Christians possess their vessels in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence.

6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. 7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. 8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but

God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.

Here we have another positive duty pressed upon the Thessalonians, in which a great part of their sanctification or holiness would discover itself, namely, justice and equity in all their dealings, man with man. Thessalonica was a city of great trade and merchandise, therefore the apostle directs them, in their traffic and commerce, neither by fraud nor force to overreach and go beyond one another: and the apostle saying, *Let none go beyond or defraud his brother*, that is, his fellow-Christian, doth not suppose it lawful to defraud such as were not their brethren, but only lets them see, that for Christians to defraud and cheat, to overreach and go beyond one another, would be a very great aggravation of their crime, seeing the laws of their religion, as well as the light of nature, condemns all such injustice and dishonesty; and accordingly, the apostle adds a reason to enforce his exhortation, drawn from the dreadful effect of all such sins, namely, that it exposes and lays open the guilty person to the direful vengeance of God: *The Lord is the avenger of all such*. Learn hence, 1. That the wisdom of God has variously dispensed the gifts of providence to mankind; to some more, to others less; to some in one kind, to others in another; so that men cannot live without mutual commerce one with another. Learn, 2. That there is such a covetous and insatiable desire of wealth in the heart of man, that little regarding the measure of worldly things, which God has dispensed unto him, he lies at catch to take all advantages of his neighbour in matters of commerce, and by defrauding and overreaching him, seeks to increase his own worldly estate with impairing that of others. *Let no man go beyond his brother*; the apostle, by forbidding this evil, plainly supposes man to be very prone and ready to fall into it. Learn, 3. That the sin of injustice in traffic and commerce is so very heinous in the sight of God, that such men as are guilty of it, without repentance, must never expect to escape the vengeance of God, either here or hereafter; God is the avenger of all such. Observe next, The reasons urged by St. Paul to enforce his foregoing exhortations to purity and justice. The first is taken from the design of God in their vocation; when called out of their heathenish state to Christianity, they were called not to uncleanness, but out of uncleanness unto holiness. The second is taken from the heinousness of their sin, who shall despise or reject the commands here

given for holiness and sanctification: *He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God*. To despise the minister of God in a command which he delivers from God, is to despise God himself; the apostle gave these commands by the direction of the Holy Spirit, which was given him for that end, *Who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit*; therefore, says he, *he that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God*. Where note, That although the reason here given, why such as despised the apostle despised God himself, be peculiar to St. Paul, who had the Holy Spirit to guide him infallibly; yet, so far as the ordinary ministers of Christ do follow the apostle's steps, and deliver nothing but what is agreeable to the word of God, the contempt of their message is a despising of God himself: *He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God*.

9 But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. 10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.

Our apostle proceeds from an exhortation to chastity and justice, to press that of love, called here, brotherly love, because it has all Christians, all our fellow-members in Christ, for its object; and he persuades to the practice of it, by a winning insinuation, that he need not say much upon this argument, because they were taught of God, that is, by the gospel of God, and influenced by the Spirit of God, to love one another. And observe we farther, The extensiveness of their love: it was not confined to a party, only to them in Thessalonica, but throughout all Macedonia; however, he desires them to extend it still farther, *To abound more and more*, that is, first in the extent of it; let it reach not only the saints throughout all Macedonia, but even to them at the ends of the earth: secondly, in the measure of it, to excel even themselves in the degrees of their love. Learn hence, That neither brotherly love, nor any other Christian grace, doth advance to such an height in any saint here, but it is still capable of further augmentation and increase; both intensively, by advancing to further measures and higher degrees of perfection, and extensively, reaching to more objects, who ought to be sharers in our love.

11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to

work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

It is supposed by some, that the charity and bounty of these Thessalonians, mentioned in the foregoing verses, occasioned some persons to be idle, and carry tales from house to house, seeking by such flatteries and insinuations to maintain themselves without working; the apostle therefore commands every man to work at some calling; that they neither be a burden to the church, nor give a scandal to the heathen. *Study to be quiet*, that is, to be of a peaceable spirit and temper; and the original word imports an ambitious study; it ought to be our ambitious desire to live quietly and peaceably with all men: and to live so with some men require study, and earnest endeavour: *If it be possible, live peaceably with all men*, says St. Paul, *Rom. xii. 18.* Implying, that there are some men that it is impossible to live peaceably with: and whereas he adds, *doing our own business, and working with our own hands*; that apostolical injunction requires, that every person be well employed, and found in the way of an honest and industrious diligence, for no man is sent into the world to be idle; and as it is every man's duty, so it is also his privilege, to have a calling; the want of which exposes to innumerable temptations, for the devil finds an idle person always ready to run of his errand.

12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that ye may have lack of nothing.*

Our apostle having exhorted the Thessalonians to industry and diligence in the foregoing verses, he presses it with a double argument in this verse. 1. Hereby they should walk honestly towards them that are without; that is, in a decent and seemly manner in the eyes of unconverted pagans, who are said to be without, because without the pale of the visible church; and, 2. Because, by God's blessing upon their industry, they would attain to such a competency of the things of this life, as to lack nothing which the wisdom of God saw fit and convenient for them; so that, by industrious diligence we please God, we profit ourselves, are serviceable to the public, we silence and stop the mouths of the enemies of religion, and beautify our profession with a becoming conversation.

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sor-

row not, even as others which have no hope.

Our apostle, from this verse to the end of the chapter, exhorts the Thessalonians to moderate their grief and sorrow for their friends who died in Christ, many of which, no doubt, were martyrs for the truth in those days of persecution: he lays down many consolatory arguments as so many sovereign antidotes against immoderate sorrow for the death of pious relations; and first he acquaints them, that such sorrow as is excessive would be more like pagans than Christians, who mourn without hope of any life after this, that is, of a resurrection from the grave, and a state of future immortality. Our apostle doth not forbid sorrow for the dead absolutely, which Christ showed for Lazarus, and the church for Stephen, but it is excessive sorrow only that is here condemned. Learn hence, 1. That all sorrow for the death of friends is not unlawful, or forbidden to Christians: the Christian religion doth not destroy natural affections, but teaches us to moderate them. Learn, 2. That there is a mighty difference between the Christian's sorrow for the dead, and theirs who are strangers to Christianity. The sorrow of the heathen was extravagant and excessive in the measure, foolish, cruel, and impious in the manner; they tore their hair, beat their breasts, cut their flesh, and ran howling up and down in the most desperate manner; but the Christian's sorrow is sober, moderate, silent, free from ostentation, under the government of reason and religion. Learn, 3. That the belief of a future state, and the hope of a joyful resurrection, is the cause of this great difference: it is the ignorance of the happiness of glorified saints in heaven, which is the cause of our immoderate sorrow for their death here on earth.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

St. Paul having, in the foregoing verse, dissuaded from immoderate grief and sorrow for the death of relations, comes now to lay down several considerations or consolatory arguments in order to it. The first word of comfort is this; that our relations over whom we mourn, are but fallen asleep; the grave is a bed, in which the saint is laid to rest, his body rests in a bed of dust, as in a safe and consecrated dormitory, till the morning of the resurrection; and if the night be long the morning will be the more joyous. The second

comfort is, they sleep in Jesus, that is, in union with Jesus, as members of his body; in the faith of Jesus, that is, in such a belief of the doctrine of Christ as is accompanied with an holy obedience to the commands of Christ. The third consolatory word is this, God will come, that is, to judgment, and when he cometh will bring his sleeping saints with him, that is, he will bring their souls from heaven, their bodies from the grave. Body and soul united he shall take up to himself into the clouds, and then carry all his saints back with him into heaven. A fourth is this, our relations are not alone in death: *Jesus died*, the Captain of our salvation marched before us through the black regions of death and the grave, and has perfumed the bed of the grave by his own lying in it. Note here, The apostle says Jesus died, the saints sleep; a believer's death is called a sleep. I do not find that Christ's death is called a sleep, no, his death was death indeed, death with a curse in it: but the believer's death is turned by Christ into a sweet and silent sleep. Again, Jesus died and *rose again*, that is a comforting consideration: he was laid, but not lost, in the grave; he rose by his own power, he rose as our head and representative, and accordingly all his saints are risen in him, and shall rise after him. *Because I live, says Christ, ye shall live also.*

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, That we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep.

In this verse St. Paul obviates an objection: Some might say, that the saints found alive at the last day might be sooner happy than the dead saints; no, says the apostle, they that are alive shall not prevent them that sleep, they shall not prevent their rising, nor shall they get the start of them, or get to heaven before them, or have any advantage above them: the living saints shall not be made happy without them, nor one moment before them. Learn hence, That the resurrection which the saints that sleep in Jesus shall be made partakers of, shall put them into as full a capacity of the glory of Christ's coming, as if they had remained alive in the body till that blessed hour. Nay, the dead in Christ shall rise first, that is, the saints who sleep in the grave at Christ's coming shall be so far from being made less happy, or later happy, than the saints who shall be found alive, that they shall be first remembered. Christ's first care will be about his dead saints; they that have slept so long in their

bed of dust shall be first awakened, before any thing be done about them that never slept: if there be any privilege, any joy, any triumph, greater than others, such as sleep in Jesus, and especially such as have suffered for Jesus, shall be partakers of it at that great day.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

These words give us the assurance of the certainty of Christ's second coming, and of the solemn manner of it, and of the consequence of it. Observe, 1. The certainty of our Lord's coming: *The Lord himself shall descend from heaven*, that is, the Lord Jesus, the Mediator: he will not depute an angel, but descend himself to finish that last part of his mediatorial office. Christ will come personally, for the judgment will be managed visibly; and for the recompense of his abasement, it is requisite that he that was judged by the world, should come and judge the world. Reason says, he may come and judge the world, for he made it; faith says, he must and shall come to judge the world, for he has promised it, *John xiv. 2.* Let us then keep up our faith, and our faith will keep our hearts. Observe, 2. The awful and solemn manner of our Lord's coming; and that is threefold. (1.) He shall descend with a shout: the original word signifies such a shout as is heard among seamen when they desery the haven, and with united voices cry out, "A shore, a shore." (2.) With the voice of an archangel: probable it is that Christ himself shall give the word of command, both to the quick and the dead, to appear before him; and that his command shall be proclaimed by an archangel. (3.) With the trump of God: the angel's proclamation shall be confirmed by sound of trumpet, which will be heard far and near, even by those who are in their graves, and in the depth of the sea. Learn hence, That our Lord's second coming at the great day to judge the quick and the dead, shall be attended with such solemnity, that all the terror, majesty, and dreadful reverence, which has been ever seen upon the earth, shall fall infinitely short of it. Great was the terror on mount Sinai, at the giving of the law; but far greater will the terror be at the day of judgment, when Christ comes to punish the transgressors of that law, and the disobeyers of his gospel. Observe, 3. The blessed consequence of his coming, namely, the resurrection of his saints: *The dead*

in Christ shall rise first; the saints shall rise with the very same bodies which they lay down in the grave; and they shall rise first, that is, before those who are alive shall be changed, though it is very probable that there will be no considerable difference of time between the glorification of the raised saints, and those that are alive at Christ's coming; yet it seems evident that the dead saints shall be raised, and in their bodies be glorified, before them that are alive shall be changed.

17 Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Observe here, 1. The triumphant ascension both of the living and sleeping saints, together into the clouds: *We which are alive shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.* This ascension shall be effected by the power of Christ, by the ministry of angels, and by the spirituality of the saints' own bodies. Learn hence, That the descent of the saints of God into the grave, is not with so much weakness, ignominy, and abasement, as their ascent after the resurrection, to meet their Lord in the air, shall be with power, triumph, and glory; Christ shall draw them, clouds shall carry them, angels shall conduct them. Observe, 2. The blessed meeting of all the saints together in one body, to take their flight together to meet the Lord Jesus, who comes from the third heaven to meet them in the lower region of the air, when Christ will own them in their persons, own them in their services, own them in their sufferings, and they shall receive their full and final benediction from the mouth of Christ, and take an everlasting possession of the heavenly kingdom together with Christ. Observe, 3. The saint's cohabitation and fellowship with Christ, together with its extent and duration: they shall be ever with the Lord. This implies the saints' presence with Christ, their vision and sight of him, their fruition and enjoyment of him, their delectation in him, their conformity to him. Learn hence, That the top and height of the saint's blessedness in heaven consists in this, that they shall for ever be there with Christ.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

That is, draw matter of consolation to yourselves from the foregoing consolations, against the loss of your deceased friends; intimating, that the best and choicest of

comforts, for supporting the spirits of men under afflictions in general, and the loss of dear relations in particular, are drawn from the holy scriptures; *Comfort one another with these words,* that is, with such scriptural words as he had now written.

CHAP. V.

Our apostle having in the foregoing chapter treated of Christ's second coming to judgment, and foreseeing that some curious persons might take occasion from thence to inquire into the time when the general resurrection and future judgment should be, in this chapter he makes it his business to divert them from all such inquiries, and to put them upon the practice and performance of such duties as would prepare and fit them for that solemn time. Where note, That it was revealed to St. Paul when he wrote this epistle, that there should be a second coming of Christ to judgment, and that it should not be till the departing from the faith, till the revelation and destruction of Antichrist, 2 Thess. ii. 2. This it seems was an after revelation, for the Lord did not at once reveal all his secrets to his servants, but by parcels.

BUT of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

As if our apostle had said, "Although I have told you that there will be a general resurrection and future judgment, when Christ will certainly come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, yet I suppose you do not expect that I should write to you of the particular time of his coming; for you have been told, that his coming will be like the coming of a thief, without warning, and without noise, when persons are most secure, least suspecting, and wholly unprovided for it; yea, as the pains of a woman in travail, which are unavoidable: the thief may perhaps not come, but the pains of child-birth must come, and also be painful when they come. Learn hence, 1. That the wisdom of God has thought fit to conceal and keep secret the determinate time of Christ's coming to judgment: and yet there is an itching curiosity in man's nature to search and pry into that profound secret, though the knowledge of it is not only impossible, but would prove unprofitable and hurtful to mankind, making the world secure and careless: whereas not knowing the hour when our Lord cometh, should oblige us to be upon our watch every hour. Note then, That our Lord will certainly come at one hour
2 Q

or other; but at what hour he will come cannot certainly be known, yet there is no hour when we can promise ourselves that he will not come. Note, lastly, That the pain and sorrow, the trouble and horror which the day of the Lord will bring upon such as are unready and unprepared for it, no tongue can utter, no heart can conceive; the greatest of earthly and bodily torments and sorrows, such as the pangs of a woman in travail, being but weak shadows and slender representations of it: the day of the Lord cometh *as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.*

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Note here, The wisdom and holy caution of our apostle in his application to the Thessalonians: he had in the foregoing verses asserted the certainty and suddenness of Christ's coming, namely, to destroy Jerusalem, and to judge the world. Now, lest these Christians should be terrified in their minds, and shaken with apprehensions of fear from the sudden destruction he had mentioned, he casts in a seasonable word of comfort here in the words before us, assuring them that were sincere Christians amongst them, that how sudden soever the coming and appearance of Christ might be, yet it should not find them unready and unprepared for it, because they were not in darkness, but in the light, and were not children of the night, but of the day: that is, they were not now in a state of heathenism, but Christianity; they were not any longer in their gross and natural ignorance of God, as they were before conversion; but they were the children of the light and of the day, living and walking in the light of the gospel, and in all holiness of conversation. Learn hence, That as sincere Christians are freed from the gross darkness of their natural state, from the darkness and ignorance of sin, and do walk in the light of an holy conversation, so their knowledge and practical holiness will be a good security against the terror of surprising afflictions, and particularly against the dread and terror of the day of judgment: *Ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.*

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch, and be sober.

7 For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken, are

drunken in the night. 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love: and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

The apostle having acquainted the Thessalonians with the privilege of their converted state, that they were the children of light, having received a light of knowledge a light of grace and holiness, and a light of joy and comfort, from the gospel, he comes next to infer the duties proper and suitable to persons in such a state. First, Negative, *Let us not sleep, as do others*; sleep is not proper for the day, but the night. The sleep here intended, is the sleep of sin and of sinful security, whereby all the spiritual senses of a man are bound up, so that he is both unapprehensive of his duty, and regardless of his danger. Secondly, Positive, *Let us watch, and be sober*; that is, let us be always ready and prepared for Christ's coming; and that we may be so, let us be found in the daily exercise of sobriety, at no time overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day overtake us unawares; the exercise of these two graces, watchfulness and sobriety, do best together, and can hardly be separated one from another; he that is not sober cannot be watchful, and he that is not watchful can never be ready for Christ's coming; let us therefore (says the apostle) *watch, and be sober.* Observe next, Our apostle subjoins a reason to enforce his exhortation to watchfulness and sobriety, because sleep and drunkenness are works of darkness performed in the night, and not suitable for the children of the day: *They that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunken, are drunken in the night.* The old heathens had their *Bacchanalia*, their drunken feasts, in the night; and in the apostle's time drunkenness was so shameful a vice, that men were ashamed to be seen drunken in the day-time; but, Lord, to what an height of impudence is the intemperance of our age arrived, when Christians blush not to do that at mid-day, which heathens were ashamed of at midnight! Observe farther, Another reason suggested why we should be thus sober and watchful, namely, because our life is a spiritual warfare. 'Tis now a time of fighting, therefore not of sleeping, and intemperate eating and drinking; soldiers must be upon their guard, and well armed; accordingly St. Paul directs to the two principal pieces of spiritual armour, to guard the most noble and vital parts, namely, the head and the heart, the helmet for the head, the breastplate for the heart;

for these two being the chief fountains of life and sensation, the preserving of them safe is, in effect, the preserving of the whole man; and accordingly the soldiers that were upon their watch and kept sentinels, never stood without their helmet and breastplate. In allusion to which, our apostle here directs us, as Christian soldiers, to put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation, without which we can never be rightly and duly prepared for our spiritual warfare. Note here, Of what admirable use faith, love and hope, are to a Christian; faith fortifies against destructive temptations, love will preserve from apostasy and revolting, and hope will be of universal use unto us in the exercises of our Christian course; it will be a cordial to comfort us, a spur to quicken us, a staff to support us, a bridle to restrain us, an helmet to defend us. *Therefore let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.*

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. 11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

Observe here, 1. A reason enforcing the apostle's exhortation to holiness of life. *For, or because, God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ.* Note here, (1.) What a Christian is not appointed to; he is not appointed to wrath. (2.) What he is appointed to, namely, to obtain salvation. (3.) The means by which a Christian doth obtain salvation; and that is, by our Lord Jesus Christ. Learn hence, That God's ordination and appointment of us to happiness and salvation, doth not discharge us from care and endeavour after the practice of universal holiness: it is the greatest piece of folly imaginable, from the appointment of the end to infer the refusal or neglect of the means. Learn, 2. That our Lord Jesus is the person appointed by God the Father, by whom alone all believers shall obtain salvation. Learn, 3. That nothing short of the death of Christ was sufficient to purchase salvation for us: *we obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, who died for us.* Learn, 4. That the great end designed by Christ in dying for us, was our living to him, in order to our living with him; a life of grace on earth is our evidence for a life

of glory in heaven: *Whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.* Observe, lastly, The great and important duty which he exhorts the Thessalonians to perform mutually to each other, and that is, to comfort themselves together with this hope, and to edify and build up one another in faith and holiness. *Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, as also ye do:* implying, that as it is the duty, so it ought to be the endeavour of Christians, to edify one another both in their graces and in their comforts.

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And be at peace among yourselves.*

In these words we have declared both the minister's office and the people's duty; the minister's office, with respect unto his people, and the people's duty both towards their ministers and one towards another. The ministerial office and function is here described, and consists of three parts, publicly to labour, privately to admonish, ministerially to rule. To labour in the word and doctrine, the word signifies a labour unto weariness; our work is the most weighty work, and, blessed be God, the most worthy work too. Admonition consists of two parts, reproving of sins committed, and exhorting to duties neglected; rightly to do both, requires that the minister be a person of knowledge and understanding, of prudence and discretion, of courage and resolution, of integrity and unblameableness of conversation. To rule, not magisterially, much less tyrannically, but in love, and with a spirit of meekness, executing that power which Christ has given for edification, and not for destruction. Such a power as the shepherd has over the flock, to guide and conduct it; as the head has over the members, to influence and quicken them; as the father of the family has over the household, to take care of it, and provide for it. Observe, 2. The people's duty to their pastors, or spiritual guides, declared; and this is twofold: 1. They are to know them, and this with a knowledge of observation, and with a knowledge of approbation, and with a knowledge of imitation. 2. They are highly to esteem them, paying honour to the function, reverence to their persons, and all this in love, and for their work's sake. Observe, lastly, The people's duty one towards another, *And be at peace among*

yourselves; such a people can never join hearts in duty that cannot join hands in love; Christian love is a nursing-mother to all graces, and tends exceedingly to make the work of the ministry successful; but when strife and dissension, when discord and division, prevail either amongst the people themselves, or betwixt minister and people, farewell all expectation of success from the ablest ministry upon earth.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*.

Here our apostle directs the ministers of Christ how to carry themselves towards their people, namely, that they should admonish those that are unruly, and walk disorderly, that they should *comfort the feeble-minded*, such as are dispirited by and dejected under their afflictions, that they should bear with the weak in faith, and be patient towards all mankind. Note hence, That the church of Christ here on earth is like an hospital of sickly and infirm persons, labouring under great variety of spiritual diseases, and consequently fit objects of Christ's ministers, to exercise their patience and pains upon; some unruly, some weak, some feeble-minded: every person, every member of the church, is a patient, and every patient has his particular distemper, which calls for indefatigable diligence, and invincible patience, from such as are spiritual physicians.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all *men*.

Our apostle from this verse closes his epistle with a general exhortation to all Christians to be found in the practice of several necessary and important duties; the first of which is to abstain from all revenge, *Render to no man evil for evil*: a malicious desire of revenge is so far beneath a Christian, that it is the baseness of a man. Let him that does the wrong look to it, could an heathen say. Not only revenge in the action, but in the affection, is greatly sinful before God, and deeply penal also: as jealousy is the rage of a man, so malice and revenge is the rage of the devil, it is the very soul and spirit of the apostate nature.

—But ever follow that which is good, &c.

By good here, as it stands in opposition

to rendering evil, must be understood good-will and beneficence, or doing good to enemies. and this the apostle will have us follow, or, as the word signifies, pursue with eagerness, as the hunter doth his game, and this continually. *Ever follow that which is good* without interruption, notwithstanding a multiplication of injuries; and this, not only among themselves who were christian professors, but even amongst heathens, (with whom they lived,) though they were bitter enemies to Christianity. Learn hence, That a Christian must not turn vindictive and impatient, or incline to any desire or motions towards private revenge, notwithstanding the malicious temper of his adversary continues; but instead of being overcome of evil must labour to overcome evil with good: *Render to no man evil for evil, but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men.*

16 Rejoice evermore.

Observe, here, 1. The very extensive and comprehensive duties, which our apostle exhorts unto, all which have a kind of universality annexed unto them; now the more comprehensive any duty is, the greater its obligation is: the first duty is to *rejoice evermore*, that is, to carry ourselves so holily towards God, and so circumspectly and unblamedly before men, that we may always have cause for rejoicing, and in the midst of temptations, and in the midst of poverty and affliction, may actually rejoice in the expectation of present advantage by them, and in the hope of the glory of God, as the reward of them. Learn hence that the children of God ought to make conscience of rejoicing in God at all times, and in all conditions. But is not there a time to mourn as well as to rejoice? Yes, but it is no where said, Mourn evermore: nay, holy mourning has the seed of spiritual joy in it, directly tends to it, will certainly end in it; mourning is but a temporary, rejoicing is an eternal, duty.

17 Pray without ceasing.

Note, from the connection, That he that would rejoice evermore, must pray evermore; seldom praying and constant rejoicing will never stand together; according to our constancy in prayer, such will be the constancy of our joy. Note, 2. That frequent and constant prayer to God, is a duty required of all christians: we are then said to do a thing continually, when we do it seasonably, when we pray at stated times, morning and evening every day; when upon extraordinary occasions

we perform the duty in an extraordinary manner, and when we perform it with unfainting perseverance, both frequently and fervently, though we receive no present answer to our prayers; and in a word, when the heart is always kept in a praying frame, this is to pray continually: and the reason for it is, because we stand in a continual need of God, we want him continually, we sin against him continually, we are surrounded with temptations continually, we are exposed to troubles and afflictions continually, and we ought to glorify God continually; and if so, we must pray continually; not that a man should do nothing else but pray; for though we may do nothing without prayer, yet we must do many things besides praying.

18 In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Observe here, 1. The duty required, and that is, thanksgiving. 2. The extent of the duty. *In every thing give thanks*, that is, be thankful in every condition, and for every providential dispensation, both prosperous and adverse. *Quest.* "Should Christians be thankful for afflictions?" Yes, because they are fruits of fatherly love, because they conform us unto Christ, because they prevent sin, and purge out sin; because they fit us for glory, and will add to our crown of glory at the great day. *Quest.* "But should Christians be thankful for sin, or when they fall into sin?" By no means. *Rule.* What we must not pray for, we may not give thanks for; we must pray to be kept from sin, therefore may not give thanks when we fall into sin: sin dishonours God, disrobes ourselves, exposes to God's wrath and curse, is the ground of our just detestation, therefore cannot be the ground of thanksgiving; yet when we obtain pardon of sin, or get any good by sin, we may and ought to rejoice at it. Observe, 3. The grounds and reasons of the duty. 1. It is the will of God, his revealed will; this the law of nature directs to, and the light of scripture calls for; and he that performs it spiritually, glorifies God abundantly. 2. It is the will of God in Christ Jesus; that is, this part of God's will is especially revealed to you by the doctrine of Christ Jesus, and by the example of Christ Jesus. Christ was both a great pattern and precedent of thankfulness all his life long; he thanked God frequently and fervently, and has made thankfulness a considerable part of our gospel service, *Heb. xiii. 15.*

19 Quench not the Spirit.

Still observe, 1. The coherence and connection: he that would *rejoice evermore must pray without ceasing*; and he that would rejoice in every thing, must be thankful in every thing; and he that would rejoice, pray, and give thanks continually, must evermore keep the Spirit unquenched: the way to keep one's self warm, is to keep the fire burning. *Quench not the Spirit*, that is, neither the graces of the Spirit, nor the motions of the Spirit. Note here, 1. That the Holy spirit of God in man is of the nature of fire; as fire it enlighteneth, it enliveneth, it warmeth, it consumeth, it purifieth and refineth, it ascendeth upward. Note, 2. That this holy fire of the Spirit may be quenched: the gifts, graces, motions, and comforts, of the Holy Spirit, are of such a nature, that if they be not cherished they are quenched; fire will go out as well by neglecting it as by casting water upon it. Note, 3. That it must be a Christian's special care that the graces of God's Holy Spirit be not quenched in him, nor any of its motions resisted by him. Sin in general quenches the Spirit, as water quenches fire, particularly sins committed against knowledge and conscience: inordinate love of the world quenches the Spirit, as earth will extinguish fire as well as water. A cold, customary, formal performance of holy duties, without the exercise of lively faith, and holy love in the performance of them, will grieve and quench the Spirit, especially sensual lusts indulged, and anger, malice and revenge, harboured in the heart; the holy dove will not rest upon that man that has the heart of a vulture in his breast and bosom: and let us always remember, if we quench the Spirit in his motions, he is also quenched by us in his offices; he doth us many good offices, in prayer, he is our helper, our assistant, he quickens to duty and in the duty, and helps our infirmities, and makes intercessions for us in our Christian course; he guides us, comforts us, and bears witness to our integrity in us; all these good offices will he cease to do for us, if he be quenched in us.

20 Despise not prophesyings.

Note here, 1. How close this duty is coupled with the former. *Quench not the Spirit: despise not prophesyings*: plainly intimating to us, that the spirit is then dangerously quenched, when prophesyings, or the preaching of the word, is sinfully neglected. Note, 2. That by prophesying here, is not meant foretelling things to come, but the interpretation and application of the holy scriptures, which we call preaching. Note, 3. That by not de-

spising it, we are to understand, that it is our obliged duty to put an high value and esteem upon it, to attend to it, and have a great regard for it, to honour the public ministry as an ordinance of God for instruction, conversion, and edification. Learn, That it is not sufficient that we do not slight the ordinance of preaching, nor declaim against it as vain and useless, (as the manner of some is,) but we are to have an honourable esteem of it, and evidence that esteem by a due attendance upon it: more is intended by the Holy Ghost than is here expressed; for though he only forbids the sin, he intends the duty or grace in strict opposition to the sin, namely, that Christians ought to be so far from despising, that they ought to be very forward in embracing the ministry and preaching of the word. *Despise not prophesyings.*

21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

Observe here, 1. The person to whom this advice is given: to the church of the Thessalonians, not to the ministers, but the people, ver. 12. *Know them that labour among you, &c.* Observe, 2. The advice itself, *Prove all things*; examine, try, and approve them, with a judgment of private discretion, not of public decision. Learn, 1. That it is the duty of all Christians to examine the grounds of their faith and religion, and not to take them upon trust; otherwise their embracing the best religion in the world is rather the result of chance, than of judgment and choice. Learn, 2. That although all doctrines and opinions must be tried; yet only that which is good must be retained. Learn, 3. That nothing is to be held fast but what is first tried: suppose we hold that which is good, yet if we have not tried and proved it to be good, it is no better to us than that which is evil; to approve before trial, is not good, though the thing approved be never so good. Inference, That this is a strong argument for the perspicuity and sufficiency of the holy scriptures, and against the necessity of a living judge; for he that must try all things, must also try the doctrine of this living judge; and therefore, till he has made this trial, must not admit his doctrine as an article of Christian faith; for these words plainly teach, that what we hold fast, must be first tried: *Try all things, and hold fast that which is good.*

22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

This advice genuinely follows upon the former; after we have tried all things, we

must hold fast that which is good, and abstain from evil. Where note, The gradation used by our apostle; we must *abstain from evil, from all evil, from all appearance of evil.* Yet observe, It is not the apostle's meaning that we abstain from all that which appears evil to others; for that would be to destroy our Christian liberty in things indifferent, and create in our minds continual perplexities: there is nothing almost we can do, but may appear evil to some. But St. Paul here enjoins us to abstain from every thing which, after trial, seems evil to ourselves, and is judged by us so to be; yet is it our duty not to give any just occasion of scandal to any, but to live not only *sine crimine*, but *sine labe*, not only without fault, but, if possible, without flaw, that the world may have nothing to spot us withal.

23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. That our apostle having exhorted the Thessalonians to labour after the highest measures of sanctification, breathes out his soul here in a most affectionate prayer to God, to sanctify them thoroughly and throughout; teaching us that instruction and supplication should go together; after we have been instant with our people, we must be earnest and instant with God for them. Observe, 2. The person whom the apostle directs his prayer for sanctification to, *The God of peace*; but why doth he not style him the God of grace? Because peace and unity is one very eminent part of that sanctification the apostle had prayed for, and had exhorted them before unto, ver. 13. *Be at peace among yourselves.* Now this grace being once well rooted, all the other parts of sanctification thrive the better. Observe, 3. How thorough and prevailing a work of sanctification the apostle prays for; namely, that God would sanctify them wholly, in spirit, soul, and body. By spirit, understand the superior faculties, the understanding, the will, the conscience; by soul, the inferior faculties, the passions, affections, and sensitive appetite; and by body, the outward man, the tabernacle of the soul. Now the apostle prays, that all these may be sanctified, because they are all defiled. Blessed be God, regenerating grace is as universal a principle as original sin was: it is in the understanding by illumination, in the will by renovation, in all the affections by sanctification, reducing those rebellious powers under the gov-

ornament and dominion of reason and religion. Observe, 4. Our apostle doth not only pray for their sanctification, but for their preservation also, that they may be *preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that is, preserved in a state of grace and holiness unto the end. All the sanctified are preserved: instability is an argument of insincerity; within a while, all possibilities of falling will be removed; in the mean while take heed of falling by thinking it is impossible to fall; for none are so near falling, as those who are most confident of their own strength and standing.

24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

Here our apostle comforts the Thessalonians with the assurance that God, who had called them to the knowledge of Christianity, would do what he had prayed for, namely, sanctify them wholly, and preserve them blameless; and this because *God is faithful*, that is, always the same, true to his word. God will certainly do his part in and towards the work of sanctification and preservation; but in a way of concurrence with our care and industry; he will do nothing without us, as we can do nothing without him. God's faithfulness is a pledge to us of the performance of all his promises, and will most certainly put him upon the performance of them; but his promise to us always supposes, yea, exacts from us, the use of all means, and particularly the exerting of our own endeavours, in order to our preservation in grace, and perseverance in holiness: *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.*

25 Brethren, pray for us.

Observe, who is he that begs prayer, a great apostle, St. Paul himself; and who it is he begs prayer from, the brethren, Christians, and fellow-members of the church at Thessalonica. Those that are most eminent for gifts and graces, are greatly desirous of the saints' prayers: particularly the ministers of the gospel, as they stand in most need of, so are they most importunate for this spiritual alms, which they crave as earnestly as ever beggar did bread at a rich man's gate. See 2 *Thess.* iii. 1.

26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.

Our apostle concludes his epistle with salutations to all the brethren and members of the church, without exception, poor and rich, advising them to manifest and

testify their affection one to another by a kiss given to each other, a ceremony of civility much in use in these eastern countries; yet requires, that it should not be a wanton, but an holy, kiss; intimating to us, that our civil actions should have a relish and savour of holiness. Hence it is that St. Paul is so careful to give particular directions for the good ordering of our speech and discourse in common conversation, that it be grave and savoury, *Col. iv. 6*: of our apparel, that it be such as becomes those that profess the gospel; and here, that our courteous salutations of each other should be chaste and holy, *Greet one another with an holy kiss*; their kiss of love and peace must truly signify what it makes show of, that neither treachery, nor cruelty, nor hypocrisy, nor lust, may insinuate itself into such a symbol of holy love.

27 I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

Our apostle having now finished his epistle, gives a strict charge for the perusal of it. In which observe, 1. The duty enjoined, with the matter of it, namely, the reading of this epistle, and for the same reason all the rest, which had the like stamp of divine authority upon them. Observe, 2. The object or parties to whom this epistle is to be read: to the brethren, *To all the brethren*. Observe, 3. The solemnity of the injunction: *I charge you*, not, I exhort, beseech, or entreat, but charge and enjoin you; nay, the word signifies, I adjure you; it has the force of an oath, and that under a curse, as if he had said, "I oblige you, under the penalty of God's curse, that this epistle be read." Learn hence, 1. That the scriptures ought to be in a known tongue, that they may be read unto, and read by, the common people. 2. That to confine the reading of the scriptures to the clergy, and exclude the laity or common people from reading of them, is a very grievous sin, contrary to the intent and design of God in the first penning and composing of them. 3. That it doth in a special manner concern the ministers and spiritual guides to take particular care that the holy scriptures be publicly read to, and privately read by, all their people; and in order thereunto, to excite parents to read them daily in their families, *Deut. vi. 9*. and in their closets, *Col. iii. 16*. And also, it is a great part of the minister's duty to look after the putting forth the children of poor parents to school, that they may learn to read the scriptures for their instruction and comfort. Lord, what

a reproach is it to this Christian nation, that in thousands of families the *Bible* signifies no more than a chip; not a soul amongst them able to read a letter in it! This is a lamentation; the Lord put it into the hearts both of ministers and people to use their utmost endeavours to roll away this reproach from us!

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

Thus concludes our apostle his excellent epistle, with his usual valediction or farewell wish, desiring, that though the Thessalonians had been large partakers of the grace and Spirit of Christ, that yet they

might receive fresh, farther, and fuller supplies, from himself, the fountain of all grace and goodness. From whence note, That so inexhaustible is the fountain of divine grace, and so copious the streams of spiritual blessings flowing from it, that no one can say, no such measures can be attained, but as more is wanting more is had, more is provided, more is allowed, more is to be thirsted after, and laboured for. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, that overflowing, that never-failing, fountain of grace and comfort, in whom all fulness dwells, that of his fulness all his members may receive, further receive, grace for grace. Amen.

THE
SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
THESSALONIANS.

The second Epistle to the Thessalonians is believed, very probably, to have been written by St. Paul soon after the first, because the same persons, Silvanus and Timotheus, were still with him when he wrote it, as they were at the writing of the first Epistle.

Having in his former Epistle expressed his longing desire to visit them, and finding by the intervention of other affairs, that he was from time to time providentially hindered from coming to them, he sends his second Epistle to them, to supply the want of his presence amongst them.

In which he first congratulates their constancy in the profession of the gospel, exhorting them to growth in grace, and perseverance in religion.

Next, he rectifies a mistake which they lay under, concerning the coming of Christ to judgment, as if that day were then at hand, when it was very far off, there being a general and grand apostasy to precede it, comforting the Thessalonians against the dread and terror of it.

Lastly, he commends divers Christian duties to them, requiring them to admonish and censure such idle persons among them who did not work, but lived upon other men's labours; and so concludes his Epistle with particular recommendations of them to the special favour and grace of God.

CHAP. I.

PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

These two verses contain the inscription of this epistle in the very same words with the former, in the foregoing epistle. In which observe, 1. The writer of the epistle, St. Paul, joining himself with his two associates, Silvanus or Silas, and Timotheus or Timothy. 2. To whom it was written, *To the church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father*, that is, established in the knowledge of God the Father, and in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. The usual salutation, *Grace and peace*, under which are comprehended all spiritual and temporal blessings: and these are set forth as flowing to us; first, from their fountain, *God the Father*: secondly, from their means of conveyance, *Jesus Christ*, as Mediator; intimating, that whatever spiritual grace or temporal blessing we now receive from God, we have it from him, not barely as a Creator, but as a Father, as a gracious Father in Christ, in and through whom all

kinds of blessings are conveyed to us. Now, 1. From St. Paul's using the very same form of words in this epistle, which he had made use of in the former, we may observe, That the Holy Spirit of God, in inditing of the scriptures, did not so much regard variety of words and style, as the purpose intended by those words; and accordingly the ministers of Christ, in the expounding and explaining of the scriptures, should rather study solidity of matter, than variety of expression, or elegance of style; it was none of the apostle's business, God grant that it may be none of ours, to please the wanton wits and gratify the luxuriant fancies of men, with a pompous sound of words; but solidly to instruct them in the great and necessary duties of the gospel, and to furnish them with the strongest arguments and motives to a good life. Plain truths, without any art or varnish, may be conveyed with more warmth and vigour to the conscience, than all the charms of human eloquence from the most fluent and popular tongue. But though we must come in plainness, yet not in rudeness of speech. Note, 2. From St. Paul's writing this epistle to the Thessalonians, when he was providentially hindered in his purpose of coming to them, and preaching amongst them, we may learn,

That as the wisdom of God has appointed several means for the edification of his church, sometimes preaching, at other times writing, so the ministers of Christ are obliged and bound to endeavour the church's edification by all means: when they cannot do it by public preaching, to endeavour it by writing: and when they can by both, their labours from the press, and from the pulpit, should be jointly employed in the church's service.

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth: 4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure;

Observe here, 1. The holy wisdom and pious prudence of our apostle, who being about to magnify and extol the graces of the Spirit wrought in the Thessalonians, particularly their faith and charity, instead of commending them for these graces, he breaks forth into praises and thanksgivings unto God for them: We thank God that your faith groweth exceedingly, and that the charity of every one of you aboundeth. His business was not to celebrate the praises and commendations of them, but to admire the special grace of God conferred upon them, and conspicuous in them. Learn hence, that as it is our duty, it will be our great wisdom and prudence, so to speak of the graces of God, which we see and observe in others, as that they may not be puffed up with any conceit of their own excellences, but see matter of praise and thanksgiving due unto God only; and nothing to themselves. Note, 2. The special and particular graces which St. Paul observed in the Thessalonians: their faith, and their charity, together with the evidence of the sincerity of these graces namely, that their faith was a growing faith, their love an abounding and overflowing love: *Your faith groweth exceedingly, and your love aboundeth*. Learn hence, That as the saving graces of faith and love do admit of degrees, and do not come to their height and perfection at once; so all other graces do either increase or decrease, grow or fade, together with these; vigour or decay of these cardinal graces have an answerable influence upon all our other graces. But how did St. Paul know that their faith did thus grow? *Ans.* He knew

the increase of their faith by their constancy in sufferings. Note, 3. Our apostle doth not barely commend these graces of faith and love, which were found in the Thessalonians, but he makes an holy boast of them, he glories in them, and excites other churches to a praise-worthy imitation of them; *We glory in you in the churches of God*. But for what? Even for your courage and patience under sufferings, persecution, and tribulations, for the sake of Christianity, and for your constancy in the faith of Christ. Learn hence, 1. That persecutions, afflictions, and tribulations, for the sake of Christianity, (when maintained, especially in the power of it,) are the common lot of God's faithful children and servants. Learn, 2. That it is the highest glory of a Christian to bear afflictions, and undergo persecutions, for the sake of the gospel, with an undaunted courage and an invincible patience. Learn, 3. That it is not unlawful, but sometimes necessary and expedient, for a minister to glory in his people; not in their multitude, nor in their riches, not in their greatness, nor in their high estimation of his person and abilities, but in the eminent graces of God's Holy Spirit in them, and in the great services and sufferings undergone by them: *We glory in you for your patience and faith, in and under all the persecutions and tribulations that ye endure*.

5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer;

As if he had said, "Which tribulations and persecutions, or which patience under your present persecutions, is a sign and token, yea, an evidence and manifestation, that God, the righteous judge, will reward you with a part and share in that kingdom for which you suffer, being in his account worthy of it: not with a worthiness of merit, but with a worthiness of meetness, they being made meet and fit for heaven hereafter by their patience and constancy under sufferings and persecutions here." Learn hence, That as none can enjoy the kingdom of heaven by meriting heaven, but by being made meet for heaven: so patience under sufferings and reproaches, under persecutions and sharp trials, is a special qualification to make us meet for the enjoyment of that glorious kingdom: *That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer*.

6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

Our apostle had shown in the foregoing verse, that their patience under persecution was a manifest evidence of God's intending them a portion of that kingdom, for which they suffered persecution; now in this verse he denounces the persecutor's doom upon them, namely, That the righteous nature of God did oblige him to recompense tribulation, and to repay trouble, to all such as did trouble them, and unkindly persecute them for righteousness sake. Learn thence, That as persecutors generally do continue finally impenitent, so the heaviest stroke of divine vengeance shall fall on such, in the day of God's most righteous judgment: *It is a righteous thing with God to render tribulation to them that trouble you.*

7 And to you who are troubled, rest with us;—

That is, "As God will certainly punish your persecutors, so he will ere long give rest to you his sufferers, together with us who are companions with you in the same sufferings; you that are troubled shall have rest with us, his persecuted apostles: you shall have rest as well as we, and you shall have rest together with us." Blessed be God that there is a day undoubtedly coming, when all the troubles of his people shall be ended indeed, and all his suffering saints shall be fully and finally rewarded for all their services and sufferings; and this distribution of rewards and punishments shall be in the presence of the whole world, at the great day, for the glory of divine justice. Then all those, who doubt or complain of God's justice, shall awfully admire and adore it. *To you that are troubled, rest with us.* Where note, 1. That the present time is a time of trouble to the people of God: their time of rest hereafter. 2. That Almighty God alloweth his troubled saints a liberty to comfort themselves with the expectation and hope, that their troubles shall shortly end, and their everlasting rest begin. 3. That it addeth much to the excellency of that rest which the troubled saints expect, that it shall be enjoyed, not by a few of the most eminent sufferers, but by all of them: *All you that are troubled shall rest with us*; with us apostles, with all the prophets and faithful servants of God. Hail, happy day! when all the saints shall sing and rejoice together; when there shall be not one wicked person among them to damp their mirth, or to diminish their joy. How desirable is the communion of saints here! How happy do they esteem themselves when they can get together by themselves! But how joyful will the time and place be, when they

get to heaven, where none shall interrupt their quiet, nothing shall disturb their rest! *God will recompense tribulation to them that trouble you: and to you who are troubled, rest with us.*

—When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

In these words we have an awful description of the day of judgment, and of the process of that solemn day. Where observe, 1. The judge described, *The Lord Jesus*, he shall be revealed from heaven: since his ascension, the heavens have contained him, and concealed him also from our sight and senses; but he shall then visibly appear, and locally descend from the highest heavens into the region of the air. *He shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him.* Observe, 2. His noble attendants; the mighty angels, every one stronger than an host of armed men. As the work Christ comes about is a great and mighty work, so he will have instruments strong and mighty, sufficient for that work; yet doth Christ make use of the angels, not for necessity, but for majesty, he can do his work without them. Observe, 3. The manner of his coming: *in flaming fire*, by which the heavens and the earth shall be burnt up, and in which the damned shall be eternally tormented. Observe, 4. The end of his coming: to take vengeance on the ignorant, and on the disobedient, on such as *knew not God*, and on them that do know, but *obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus*. Learn hence, 1. That it greatly tends to the comfort and support of persecuted Christians, that Christ their righteous judge will come: *He shall be revealed*, and nobly attended; he shall come as an exalted king, accompanied with a glorious train of mighty angels. Learn, 2. That the dread and terror of the day of judgment, will be matter of comfort to the godly, no ways terrifying. Those very flames which shall set the heavens and the earth in a blaze, and occasion dreadful consternation and fear to the wicked and impenitent world, shall be a comfortable sight to the godly, and the fore-thoughts of them may and should yield comfort to them under their present troubles. Learn, 3. That ignorance, whether in pagans or in Christians, doth very much, but disobedience to the gospel doth very much more, expose persons, and lay them open to the vengeance of the great day: If Christ will

render vengeance to them that know him not, much more to them that do know, but *obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

Observe here, The tremendous dreadfulness of that wrath and vengeance which at the great day will be inflicted on the ignorant and disobedient part of mankind; to denote the greatness of it, it is called *destruction*, not as if it were an abolishing of their nature, and utter extinction of their being, as the destruction of beasts is; but a loss of their happiness and well-being, as the destruction of the fallen angels was; and to set forth the duration of it, it is called *everlasting destruction*, a dying life, and a living death; their debt will never be paid, they will never come out of prison; they will be always satisfying, but never able fully to satisfy, divine justice. And observe farther, As their punishment of sense is here described, so we have their punishment of loss declared: they shall be banished from the presence of the Lord, that is, for ever excluded from the sight of his blessed face, and the enjoyment of his gracious presence: the presence of his favour they shall never find, the presence of his fury they shall ever feel. Lord, how is thy presence here on earth, life, light, and joy, to thine own people: how much more will it be so in heaven! But how terrible and dreadful will thy presence be to the wicked at the great day, even everlasting destruction! Lord, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear, when thou appearest! Thy very presence shall punish and torment them, and thy glorious power drive them away to the place of torment prepared for them. *They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*; that is, destruction shall come forth immediately from the presence and glorious power of Christ upon them, and that without any measure of mitigation; the sentence denounced will be instantly executed, and the sinner that is banished from Christ's presence shall be everlastingly tormented by his power.

10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

The former verses represented to us the great end of Christ's appearance to judg-

ment; with respect to the wicked, it was for punishment, they shall be punished with everlasting destruction, &c. Now here we have assigned the gracious design of Christ's coming with relation to the godly: he shall come to be glorified in his saints. Where note, The character of Christ's saved ones, they are saints, all such, and only such; not by visible profession barely, but by inward sanctification, and holiness of conversation also; and also all *believers*, who are endued with the grace of saving faith. Note, 2. The end of Christ's coming, with reference to his own children. 1. To be *glorified in his saints*: mark, not to be glorified by them, but to be glorified in them: the head will not only be glorious in himself, but glorified in his members. The glory God gave the Son, he hath given the saints, and will put such a glory upon them in soul and body, as he himself shall be thereby glorified. 2. *Admired in all them that believe*, that is, he will do such things for believers, as will be to their own and others' admiration; things that will not only exceed their unbelief, but their faith too. Plainly thus, the Lord Jesus at the great day will put such glory upon believers as never was expected either by themselves or others, and consequently shall be admired, greatly admired, eternally admired, by all beholders. But, Lord, if the glory put on the saints shall be thus admired, how much more shall thyself be admired, the bestower of that rich transcendent glory! The glory of thy justice in the damnation of the wicked will be admired, but not comparably with the glory of thy mercy in the salvation of believers. O! how will this strike the adoring angels into an ecstasy of holy admiration, and transport thy admiring saints into an eternal rapture, when thou shalt come to be glorified in the saints, and admired in all them that believe.

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *his* goodness, and the work of faith with power:

In these words St. Paul assures the Thessalonians, that although he could not come to them, that yet he prayed fervently for them: *We pray always for you.* The faithful ministers of Christ can as soon forget themselves as their people in their prayers to God. Observe next, what he prayed for, on their behalf,—1. That God would count them worthy, that is, fit and meet for his calling; that is, for the fore-mentioned glory, which they were called to the expect-

tation of, for they were already called; and therefore calling here must denote that unto which they were called, even the kingdom of glory. 2. That in order to this, God would fulfil, fully perform and accomplish, his whole purpose, here called his pleasure, and the pleasure of his goodness; to show that nothing but his own goodness was the cause of his own purpose. 3. He prays that God by his own power would strengthen the work of faith in them. *And the work of faith with power.* Where note, 1. That we are not only saved by God's good pleasure, but by faith. 2. That there is no saving faith, but what is a working faith. 3. That faith is wrought by a wonderful power, which doth produce wonderful effects.

12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our apostle declared at verse 10, how Christ should be glorified in his saints hereafter; now he prays that the name of Christ may be glorified in them here. Where note, That sanctifying grace maketh Christians a glory to the name of Christ, not by adding any glory to him, which before he had not, but by setting forth that glory which he already hath. Note also, That as the name of Christ is glorified in the saints now, so they shall be glorified in him then, and glorified with him, and by him. The same glory, for kind, shall be put upon the head and members; grace is the only way to glory, and glory will be the certain reward of grace.

CHAPTER II

The former chapter was spent in a consolation against trouble, this in a caution against errors, or to rectify their judgments concerning the time of Christ's second coming. An error had crept in among the Thessalonians, concerning the speedy and immediate coming of Christ to judgment whilst they were yet alive; which error Satan had set on foot to subvert their faith, and expose the whole Christian doctrine to contempt. Therefore to guard them against this fabulous error, he thus bespeaks them.

NOW, we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

As if the apostle had said, "Brethren, we beseech you, as you assuredly expect the coming of Christ, and do love, look, and long for, that day when it shall go well with you, and Christ will appear to your glory, that you be not troubled," &c. Learn

hence, that the coming of Christ to judgment is a truth well known, firmly believed, and earnestly desired, by all true Christians; well known, because the apostles, when they went abroad to proselyte the world, usually began with this point; firmly believed, for a day of judgment was never denied by any but those whose interest it was that there should be none; and earnestly desired, in respect of Christ our Judge and Saviour, and in respect of ourselves, who shall be sharers in the happiness of that day. Observe, 2. The apostle calls the coming of Christ, a *gathering together unto him*; intimating, that when Christ shall come, all the saints shall be gathered together unto him: at the day of judgment there shall be both a congregation and a segregation; a congregation of all believers, to make up the number of Christ's train and attendants, and that in one troop they may be brought unto his heavenly kingdom; and a segregation, he shall separate the sheep from the goats, and sever the wicked from among the just; *St. Matt. xiii. 44.*

2. That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Note here, 1. The error which the apostle disproves, namely, that the day of Christ, that is, the day of judgment, was then at hand, to come in a few years; which was very true with respect to his coming to destroy Jerusalem, but not as the final judgment. Learn hence, That the time of Christ's coming to judgment must be patiently expected, but not positively determined. Note, 2. The effect which this error might produce, namely, trouble and unsettledness of mind: *That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or troubled*: implying, (1.) That errors breed trouble and disquietude of mind. (2.) That Christians should be so established, and have such constancy of mind, that they should not be easily shaken and moved from the faith. Note, 3. A removal of all the supposed foundations of this error, or the means which these impostors used to entice the Thessalonians to embrace it; and they are three, namely, spirit, word, and letter; *Not by spirit*, that is, be not shaken in mind by any pretence of spiritual or divine revelation; *nor by word*, by any pretended message or word from us; *nor by letter*, that is, nor by any thing contained in our former epistle, or in any spurious and counterfeit writings, passing under the apostle's name:

mentioning as if Christ should come in that age wherein they lived. We need not wonder that St. Paul is so careful to obviate this error of the present coming and appearance of Christ, because, should the Thessalonians have depended upon it, and found themselves deceived in their expectation of it, it might have caused great trouble to them, and even shaken their steadfastness in faith.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

As if the apostle had said, "Let no man deceive you in this article of your faith, by any pretence whatsoever; for before Christ's coming there shall come a great falling away from the catholic faith, and by that means the man of sin will be revealed, who is the son of perdition:"—Note here, 1. Such a proneness there is in the nature and mind of man to embrace and entertain error, when once vented, that there is need of repeated dissuaves from it, and to guard persons against the poison and infatuation of it. *Let no man deceive you by any means.* Note, 2. A general apostasy or defection of the visible church from the faith of Christianity, must be before Christ's coming to judgment; *Except there come a falling away first.* It is foretold as a thing that would certainly come to pass. Note, 3. The revelation of Antichrist declared, *That man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition;* where by the man of sin, understand not a particular individual person, but a society and succession of men, such as is found in and amongst the papacy, where the sodomy, blasphemy, incest, adulteries, sorceries, murders, treasons, which are not only committed, but countenanced; not only acted, but authorized; do most evidently declare that there never was such an apostasy from Christianity since it had a being in the world, as is found amongst them. Note, 4. This man of sin is also styled *the son of perdition.* (1.) Actively, a destroying son, one that brings others to destruction. (2.) Passively, a son that shall be destroyed; Antichrist and all his adherents shall be destroyed, utterly destroyed, by Jesus Christ, and his kingdom shall perish without any hope of recovery; first destroying, and at last destroyed. Where note, That our apostle at the first, the very first, mentioning Antichrist, doth declare his destiny; at his first rising he declares his fall and ruin. *That man of sin, the son of perdition.*

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Our apostle proceeds in the further description of this man of sin, by a two-fold note of distinction, namely, by his enmity and opposition, and by his dignity and exaltation. Observe, 1. His enmity and opposition; *He opposeth himself*, that is, against Christ, as his name Antichrist signifies, opposing him in his doctrine, in his offices, in his members; corrupting his doctrine, debasing his offices, persecuting his members. Observe, 2. His dignity and exaltation, which consists of two parts, 1. *He exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped;* that is, he exalteth himself above all magistrates, emperors, kings and princes, who are called gods, because representing his person, as his vicegerents, usurping a power over all civil authority, enthroning and dethroning princes at his pleasure. 3. His arrogance is set forth, in relation to God himself, that *as God he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.* By the temple of God, understand the church of God, the external, visible church, which professeth the faith of Christ and bears his name; in this temple of God he *sitteth* as an officer or bishop: and sits as *God*, that is, as God upon earth, whom all must adore: kings kissing his feet, emperors holding his stirrup; and claiming the same power that Christ hath in and over the church, namely, an universal supremacy, an absolute authority, and an unerring infallibility. And the usurped titles given to him declare that he *sheweth himself that he is God*; he is called *supremum numen in terris*; "the chief god upon earth;" and that from him it is affirmed, that no appeals are to be made, no, not to God himself; that he can change the sacraments delivered by Christ, and decree contrary to scripture. Now to accept of these flattering titles, and to pretend to such an unlimited power, is to *show himself that he is God.*

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

Observe here, That the doctrine of the rise and ruin of Antichrist is necessary to be made known; for though these things were not to come to pass in their days, yet St. Paul taught them before when present, and now repeateth it again when absent, to fasten it upon their mind and memories;

it is necessary to deliver this doctrine, both to warn the faithful against delusion, and to fortify the faithful against persecution, and to keep them patient under it; for when Antichrist is discovered, Christians under his tyranny submit to sufferings more cheerfully: suffering under Antichristian persecutors is martyrdom and suffering for Christ, as well as under pagan persecutors.

5 And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle intimated to the Thessalonians that Antichrist was not then revealed, and consequently that they were not then to expect the coming of Christ to judgment. Observe, 2. The impediment that then hindered his revelation: *Now ye know what withholdeth*; by which the Roman empire is generally understood: the man of sin could not rise to his greatness, so long as the Roman empire stood in its grandeur; for this seat could not be filled with two imperial powers at once; whilst the Roman emperor possessed Rome, and the seat was full, until it was void it could not be the seat of Antichrist. But why did not the apostle name it then? *Ans.* That he might not incense the Roman emperors against the Christians, as he must have done, had he openly said, "Antichrist shall not come till the Roman empire is destroyed;" he therefore covertly says, *Ye know what withholdeth.*

7 For the ministry of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way.

That is, the beginnings of Antichristianity are secretly and mysteriously already working, which will bring Antichrist himself forth in time, even Antichristian doctrines, and the affecting of Antichristian dominion: only the empire that now hindereth must be removed and taken out of the way. Note here, so great an enemy is Satan to the salvation of mankind, that no sooner did Christ erect a kingdom in the world for saving sinners, but the devil set up his ensign in opposition thereunto. Antichristianism is almost as old as Christianity; the mystery of iniquity soon appeared after the revelation of the mystery of godliness; though truth be error's elder, yet error is not much truth's younger: *The mystery of iniquity doth already work.* And from these words, *He that letteth, will let, till taken out of the way, learn, That the greatest empires and monarchies upon earth*

have their final and fatal periods determined by God, beyond which they shall not stand; the Roman empire that letteth, shall be taken out of the way.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

These words contain both the risk and ruin of Antichrist, his revelation and destruction. Observe, 1. The title given to him, *ὁ Ἀντισυμ, the lawless one*, he that boasts himself to be above all law, and assumes to himself a power to dispense with all the laws of God, as we well know who does. Observe, 2. His revelation, *Then shall that wicked be revealed.* God has revealed Antichrist to the world, let none wilfully shut their eyes against him, but let him be shunned and abhorred; if his adherents will not fall off from him, but be partakers with him in his sins, let them expect to be partakers also with him in his plagues; to continue his adherents is dangerous, but to turn his disciples is more dangerous: for that is a downright apostasy, and flat revolt from Christ to Antichrist. How Almighty God may dispense mercifully with errors imbibed in our education we know not, but to turn our back on the truth wherein we have been educated and instructed, makes it more dangerous to our salvation. Observe, 3. Antichrist's ruin, *Whom the Lord shall consume and destroy.* Here note, That the apostle had no sooner discovered Antichrist's rise, but he presently declares his ruin: The Lord shall destroy him; that is, the Lord Jesus Christ shall destroy him gradually, he shall waste away by little and little; as his rise was, such shall his ruin be: destroyed and consumed he shall be, but not presently; because God has an use for him, work to do for him, to scourge his people, to try his people, to unite his people. Observe, 4. How Antichrist's ruin is accomplished, (1.) *With the spirit of his mouth*, or the breath of his mouth: the expression denotes, the facility and easiness of his destruction: it is done with a breath; the breath of God will leave him breathless; as he hath stood by the flattering breath of men, so he shall fall by the consuming breath of God. The breath of God here denotes the preaching of the gospel, and intimates, that Antichrist's destruction shall be by the ministry of the word, and the victorious evidence of truth; but besides this ministerial word, there will be a providential word,

which God will make use of for Antichrist's destruction: the former means we are to use, the latter God is to make use of. Again, (2.) The destruction of Antichrist shall be by the *brightness of Christ's coming*; at Christ's coming to judgment, the final ruin and utter destruction of Antichrist shall be accomplished; let not the church then be discouraged, though Antichrist remains, after all endeavours used for his ruin, it is sufficient we are assured that Antichristianism shall be finally destroyed; for the time, leave we that to God; if it be not till the day of judgment, or Christ's final conquest over all his adversaries, why should not we be contented to tarry for it; seeing infinite wisdom determines the time, as well as the thing itself.

9 *Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders,*

An account is here given how Antichrist doth acquire and keep up his power in the world: the first and great instrument is Satan; after the working of Satan, is as much as, by the working of Satan, denoting not only his pattern but his influence. The devil has a great hand over wicked men in the world, his way of dealing with them is most efficacious and powerful; he is certainly the first founder and supporter of the Antichristian state. Observe, 2. The subordinate instrumental means by which Antichrist gained his power in the world; namely, by pretended miracles: *With all power, and signs, and lying wonders.* Miracles are called powers, because the effects of extraordinary powers; signs, from their use, because they sealed the doctrine to which they are applied; wonders, because they breed astonishment in the minds of beholders. Now Antichrist pretends to all these, but his are lying powers, lying signs, and lying wonders; because the greatest of his pretended miracles are fables, forgeries, impostures, diabolical delusions. Learn hence, That Antichrist doth uphold and support his kingdom by a false show of signs, wonders, and mighty deeds; they are *mira*, but not *miracula*; what he cannot prove by the oracles of God, he endeavours to prove by the miracles of Satan.

10 *And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

Here we have a threefold description given of the subjects of Antichrist's king-

dom; they are described, 1. By the ways and means how they are drawn into this apostasy and defection, and that is, *with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*; where, by unrighteousness, understand his false doctrine and wicked laws, which tend to the making his disciples and followers injurious to God, unjust to men, and cruel to themselves; and by deceivableness, is meant all manner of deceits and wiles, tricks and cunning persuasions, to make the world believe his unrighteous errors to be pure and innocent truths. Learn, That such as are ringleaders to error, are men of no conscience, but find out all unrighteous ways and means to make their tenets plausible, and pass for truth; they come *with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*. Again, 2. They are described by the doom and misery which await them, they are such as perish; that is, such as are in an actual state of perdition, and, without hastening out of it, are undone for ever. Learn hence, That the subjects of Antichrist's power and seduction are those that perish. And, 3. They are described by their sin, which is the cause and reason of this doom: *Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.* Where mark, It is not enough to receive the truth in the light of it, but we must also receive it in the love of it, or it will do us no good; to make truth operative, there is required, besides knowledge, faith and love, there may be knowledge without faith, and there may be faith without love, that is, without any affection to the truth believed; it was therefore a pious prayer of St. Austin, *Fac me, Domine, &c.* "Lord, make me taste that by love, which I taste by knowledge." As the certainty of truth calls for faith, so the amiableness of truth calls for love: if truth be not received into the heart as well as the head, it will not secure against apostasy, nor prevent perishing.

11 *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

The sin of those who are seduced by Antichrist was mentioned in the foregoing verse, the judgment of such is here declared in these verses, which is twofold, delusion in this world, and damnation in the next. 1. Delusion in this world. Here note, 1. The author of this judgment, *God shall send them strong delusions*; as it is a sin, God has no hand in it; but as it is a

punishment, God has to do in it; there is a judicial transduction or delivering them up to a spirit of error, who do not receive the truth in the love of it, and this without the least shadow of unrighteousness, punishing sin with sin. Note, 2. The degree or nature of the punishment: delusions, *strong delusions*: given up to the efficacy of error, which is discovered by the absurdity of those errors which they cleave unto, and by the obstinacy wherewith they cleave unto them. Learn hence, (1.) That strong delusions may be, and sometimes are, of God's own sending. (2.) That by God's just judgment there is an infatuation upon the followers and abettors of Antichrist, that they swallow the grossest errors, and believe the strongest delusions, to their own destruction. Note, 3. The issue and result of this punishment, *That they should believe a lie*; false doctrines are often called a lie in scripture: all the doctrine of the man of sin, with which he hath deceived the world, under the notion of truth, is one great lie; but beside this, he approves and applauds the doctrine of equivocation, and teaches, that in many cases it is necessary, and in some very lawful, to lie; these they call pious frauds, but they are indeed diabolical forgeries. Observe, 2. Their dreadful punishment in the other world, *That they all might be damned, &c.* Where mark, the punishment itself, damnation, for filling up the measure of their obduration, together with the justice and equity of it; expressed negatively, *they believed not the truth*, received it not with simplicity of mind, to be instructed and directed by it; positively, *they had pleasure in unrighteousness*, in unrighteous doctrines and practices. Learn hence, 1. That errors in judgment, as well as sins in practice, may bring damnation upon the souls of men. Error is as damnable as vice, for it is as contrary to the law of God as vice is. Learn, 2. That though all errors may bring damnation upon men's souls, yet some may be said more especially than others to be damning errors; such are the errors of Antichrist, the man of sin. Oh, how dangerous then it is to be found amongst his followers! To be sharers with them in their sins, will render us partakers of their plagues.

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth;

Our apostle, having in the foregoing

verses set forth a fatal apostasy from the sincerity of the Christian faith and worship, here in this verse exempts the Thessalonians from the number of those that were endangered by it; and this he makes mention of, to their great comfort, and with thanksgivings to God: *We are bound to give thanks, &c.* Observe here, 1. The titles given to the Thessalonians by our apostle, *Brethren*, and *beloved of the Lord*; not beloved of the apostle only, but of the Lord also, both with an antecedent love, bestowing grace upon them, and with a consequent love, believing in his name, and suffering for his sake. Observe, 2. His obligation to bless God on their behalf, he gave thanks: this showed his esteem of the blessing; he gave thanks always, which showed how deeply he was affected with the blessing, and he owns it as a debt which was due unto them; *We are bound to give thanks, &c.* Observe, 3. The matter of his thanksgiving, or the mercy which he was thus thankful for, and that was their election to salvation; *We are bound to give thanks, because God hath chosen you.* Whence learn, That God's election either of ourselves or others to salvation, is, and ought to be, great matter of thanksgiving unto God. Observe, 4. Their election is amplified, (1.) By the antiquity of it, from the beginning, that is, from all eternity, John i. 1. *In the beginning was the word*, that is, before the beginning, before God began to create any thing, the Word was. (2.) From the means of its accomplishment; and they are two, one on God's part, the sanctification of the Spirit; the other on their part, the belief of the truth. Where note, 1. That election is to the means as well as to the end; and without the means, can the end never be attained; he that hath chosen us to salvation, hath chosen us to be holy, and to believe the truth, in order to salvation. Note, 2. That sanctification and holiness are not the cause of our election, but the effect and fruit of it. Note, 3. That sanctification being the fruit, it is also the evidence of our election; *Sic se aperit decretum*, thus the decree of God is made evident to us; the election of God is a secret in the bosom of God, it is only manifested to us by the effects, which are sanctification by the Spirit, and a sound belief of the gospel. Where mark, a bare belief of the doctrine of the gospel saves none, unless accompanied with the sanctification of the Spirit. Note, 4. The necessary connection between the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth, even as between the cause and the effect, and they do also accompany one another; the gospel was a

supernatural doctrine, and it was fit that it should be accompanied with a supernatural operation, how else should it be known to be of God? The gospel and the Spirit are inseparable companions; where the gospel is little known, there is little of the Spirit found: *He hath chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.*

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle comforted the Thessalonians in the former verse from their election, in this from their vocation; whereunto, that is, to which salvation, sanctification, and belief of the gospel, *God hath called you*, by our preaching of the word, to the obtaining of the glory purchased, and conferred by our Lord Jesus Christ. Note here, 1. The author of the Thessalonians' vocation, God the Father; he calleth you, that is, God, who from the beginning chose you to salvation. None but God, (1.) Hath authority to call; He only is our proper Lord, and rightful Sovereign, our Creator, and our owner; therefore he has a right to call us to duty, and to require duty from us, James iv. 12. *There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.* None but God, 1. Hath power to call; for to effectual calling there is required, not only the invitation of the word, but also the effectual operation of the Spirit; it is a work of divine power to give grace to graceless souls. Note, 2. The means, that is, the external and outward means, by which they were called; *By our gospel*, that is, by our preaching of the gospel to you. The ministry of the word is the great instrument in the hand of the Spirit for a sinner's effectual vocation, and bringing home to God. But why doth our apostle call it *our* gospel? Doth not that derogate from the authority of it, to appropriate it to any man? No; he calls it not his gospel by way of revelation, but in regard of dispensation only; and *his* gospel, imported the great pains which he took in preaching of the gospel, and the hazard he ran in dispensing of the gospel to them. It is also a word of esteem, love, and affection; what we love, we call *ours*. Note, 3. The end of this calling, which is twofold, 1. Ultimate, to obtain the *glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*; that is, the glory of heaven, and of the whole man, whole soul and body in heaven, called the glory of Christ, because purchased by him, promised by him, prayed for by him, conferred by him, and enjoyed eternally with him. 2. Subordinate, they are called to

faith and holiness, in order to salvation: for there must be a likeness between the person calling, and the persons called; without likeness to him we can never love him, and without loving of him must never expect to live with him. From the whole, learn, That such as are elected and chosen of God, are in time effectually called by faith and holiness to obtain eternal glory and happiness.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle.

Our apostle having abundantly comforted the Thessalonians in the former verses, from their election and vocation, he closes the chapter with an exhortation to them to perseverance and constancy in the truth; *Therefore, brethren, stand fast.* Observe, 1. The illative particle, *therefore*; that is, because God hath chosen and called you, and given you such assurance of his favour, and such advantages against error and seduction, therefore let it be your care to persevere; assurance of salvation doth not encourage negligence, but engage to greater diligence. Observe, 2. The duty inferred: *stand fast*; it is a military word, used by captains to their soldiers, to prevent a cowardly and treacherous revolt; he had been describing a great apostasy that would come, now bids them be upon their guard and stand fast. Observe, 3. The means directed to, in order to their steadfastness and perseverance, namely, to hold the traditions which they had been taught, either by word or by epistle. Here note, (1.) The act, *hold*, with a strong hand, hold against all assaults, whether of error or persecution. (2.) The object, the *traditions taught*, either by word, or by epistle. Where mark, That all the apostle's doctrines, whether preached when amongst them, or written to them in his absence from them, he calls *traditions*; so that holding the traditions here, is nothing else but perseverance in apostolical doctrine. From the whole note, 1. That what assurance soever we have of God's preserving us in the truth, yet are we bound to use all possible care and caution in order to our own preservation. Note, 2. That it is our duty to stand fast in the faith of Christ, and professions of godliness, whatsoever dangers or temptations we may be exposed to. Note, 3. That the doctrine of Christianity taught by the apostles is a tradition, and that holding this tradition is the best means for standing fast in the faith of Christ. Note, 4. That while the apostles were in

being, there were two ways of delivering the truth, namely, by word of mouth and writing; *Whether by word or our epistle.* Note, 5. That now, when they are long since dead, and we cannot receive the doctrine of life from them by word of mouth, we must stick to the scriptures and written word, against all pretences to unwritten traditions, or pretended revelations, because the scriptures are a perfect rule both for our faith and practice.

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace. 17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Our apostle having abundantly comforted and affectionately exhorted the Thessalonians in the former verses, now concludes with fervent prayer for them. Where observe, 1. The persons prayed to: our Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Father. Where note, (1.) That prayer must be made to God alone, he only knows all our wants, and he alone is capable of hearing and helping us. Note, (2.) That Jesus Christ is here invoked, together with God the Father; surely his Godhead is hereby proved, for he that is the object both of internal and external worship, is God: our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, &c. Observe, 2. The ground of audience and success in prayer: *Which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.* Where note, (1.) That God's love to sinners, manifested in their redemption by Jesus Christ, giveth great boldness and encouragement in the duty of prayer. Note, (2.) That God hath given all believers solid ground of substantial and perpetual consolation; he hath given us everlasting consolation. Note, (3.) That God has given all believers hope, a good or well-grounded hope of eternal life, and this hope is a great encouragement to the duty of prayer. Observe, 3. The blessings prayed for: increase of comfort, and perseverance or establishment. (1.) The apostle prays for increase of comfort; *Our Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Father, comfort your hearts.* Where note, that true comfort flows from God, and that the heart is the proper seat of spiritual comfort. Psal. iv. 7. *Thou hast put gladness into my heart.* (2.) For establishment and perseverance; *And establish you in every good word and work.* By every good word, is meant sound doctrine; by every good work, holiness

of life. Learn hence, That establishment in faith and holiness is a great and necessary blessing, earnestly to be sought of God in prayer; as at all times this blessing is to be sought, so especially in unsettled times, that when we are most in danger of falling by temptation, we may be kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation.

CHAP. III.

Our apostle closed the foregoing chapter with a fervent prayer for the Thessalonians: he begins this chapter with requesting their prayers for him. It is a mutual duty which ministers and people owe to each other, to pray one for, as well as one with, another; though St. Paul was an apostle, and one that gave himself unto prayer, yet he found need of the help and benefit of the Thessalonians' prayers, and accordingly thus he bespeaks them:

FINALLY, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

Observe here, 1. A courteous and loving compellation, *brethren.* There is a three-fold brotherhood, which the scripture takes notice of betwixt Christ and believers, betwixt believers themselves, and betwixt the ministers of Christ and their beloved people. Observe, 2. St. Paul's passionate request and supplication, *Brethren, pray for us.* Learn hence, That an interest in the prayers of all those that have an interest in God, is the passionate desire and earnest request of all the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ; there is nothing that the ministers of Christ do more want or need, nothing that they so much desire and crave, as the spiritual alms of their people's prayers; their work is a work of the greatest weight, of the greatest labour, of the greatest difficulty and opposition; and alas, their shoulders are no stronger than other men's, to stand under the weight of this burden; wonder not then they cry out so importunately for the help and benefit of their people's prayers. Observe, 3. The subject matter which he desires them to pray for, *That the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified:* in the original, that the word may run and be glorified; a metaphor taken from a water-course, where the current flows freely, without interruption or obstruction. *Quest.* When may the word be said to have free course? *Ans.* When it is freely preached, and successfully preached: when it is preached without external opposition, and accompanied with the Spirit's internal operation. Learn hence, That it is the standing duty of the people of God to wrestle with God

at the throne of grace, for the free course of the word in the labours of his ministers; *Pray that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.* But when may the word be said to be glorified? When God is glorified in and by the word, by the conversion of sinners, by the exemplary conversation of believers; then is God glorified, when his word is entertained. Observe, 4. The argument to excite the Thessalonians to pray for the success of the word amongst others, namely, the great and good success which God had given it amongst them: That it may be glorified, *as it is with you.* Thence learn, That such as have felt the power of the gospel themselves, to their conversion and salvation, should pray that others may partake of the same benefits, by it and from it, together with themselves: herein they show their love to God, and charity to the souls of men.

2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith.

In the former verse, St. Paul desired the Thessalonians' prayers with reference to the word; here he requests it with relation to himself, that his person might be preserved, as well as his preaching prosper; that so long as God had any work for him to do, he might be preserved from the rage and fury of the unbelieving Jews, and persecuting Gentiles, who followed him from place to place, to give him trouble: *That we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.* Where note, The odious character with which the apostle brands the enemies of his ministry; he calls them unreasonable men, whom no reason or argument could convince and satisfy; and wicked men, of vicious lives and debauched practices: they are usually the vilest and worst of men, the very dregs of mankind, who set themselves to persecute the preachers, and oppose the preaching, of the gospel. Next, he subjoins a reason why he did so earnestly desire their prayers for deliverance from dangers: because *all men have not faith*, neither fidelity, nor faithfulness, much less sincere faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; for then they would not oppose his gospel, nor persecute us from place to place, for the plain and persuasive preaching of it. Where note, That what profession soever a person makes of godliness and religion, and how high soever his pretences are of external devotion, yet if he opposes the gospel, in the power, purity, and progress of it, he is and may be deservedly styled, *an unreasonable and wicked man*, who wants fidelity, moral honesty,

and real virtue; and acts only for his own interest, and to please a party.

3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

Our apostle had prayed for the Thessalonians' establishment before, chap. ii. 17. He assures them of it now; *God will stablish you and keep you from evil*, from all evil, and particularly from the evil of apostasy; and the argument for assurance is drawn from the fidelity of God, and his faithfulness in all his promises: *The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you.* Learn hence, That the Christian's establishment in grace, his perseverance in holiness, and preservation from sin, depends upon the power and faithfulness of God, in concurrence with their own united endeavours to establish and preserve themselves from falling; *The Lord is faithful, &c.*

4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

As if the apostle had said, "Although I gave you the assurance of God's faithful readiness, according to his promise, to do every thing that is requisite on his part, in order to your establishment in holiness, and preservation from sin; yet you must not, you cannot, expect the assistance of God, except you also add your own endeavours, as I have commanded; and accordingly, I have good confidence, that what I command you in the Lord, or by the authority of the Lord, both now and hereafter, at all times, shall be performed by you." Where note, The character of that obedience which the gospel directs; it must be universal and perpetual: Ye do all things that I command you, and I have confidence that ye will do.

5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

As if he had said, "That we may not be mistaken in this our confidence, we pray that the Lord will direct your hearts into the love of God, which will constrain you to this obedience." Where note, That to direct man's heart right into the love of God, is the work of God; *The Lord directs your heart into the love of God.* Note farther, That these Thessalonians did love God already; for the apostle had before commended their work of faith, their labour of love, and yet here he prays, that their hearts may be directed into the love of God, &c. Learn

hence, That the hearts of the holiest and best of saints do stand in need of a more perfect and constant direction into the love of God; as ships that are best rigged need a pilot, so they that love God must need to have their love ordered and directed to the best advantage of his glory. Observe farther, From the phrase here used, (*direct*;) that God works upon us as rational creatures; he changeth the heart indeed, but he doth it by direction, not by violence and compulsion: the Spirit's conduct is sweet, yet powerful; it changes the will, but without offering violence to the freedom and liberty of the will; we are not forced but directed; *The Lord direct your hearts*.—Again, the *Lord direct your hearts*; it implies, there are many things that would wreath and bend, crook and turn, our hearts another way, and direct our love to a contrary object, to the world and the flesh; therefore we had need pray with earnestness, *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God*; it follows, — and into the patient waiting for Christ. Note here, 1. The true character of a sincere Christian; he waits for the coming of Christ: such as love Christ fervently, long for his coming greatly. Note, 2. How patience qualifies those holy ardours, and longing desires, which the saints have to be with Christ: though love sets us upon the wing to be gone, yet patience commands us to wait Christ's own time for going; vehement love needs the alloy of patience; most need much patience to die, but some need as much patience to live: therefore says the apostle, *The Lord direct your hearts into a patient waiting for Christ*; intimating, that the saints of God have great need of patience to enable them to endure that state of distance and separation from Christ so long as they must endure it in this world: well then might the apostles pray on behalf of the Thessalonians, *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and patient waiting for Christ*.

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

Our apostle here enters upon a new subject, namely, that of such discipline; not only exhorting, but commanding and requiring them to excommunicate from their society every brother or Christian professor walking disorderly, and not after the tradition or doctrine delivered by him against such persons. Note here, 1. That though the apostle did oftentimes entreat

and beseech, yet he had authority to enjoin and command; *We command you, brethren*. Note, 2. That this authority to command he had not of himself, but from Christ; *We command you in the name of the Lord Jesus*. A minister must look that his commands be grounded upon the authority of Christ, or else they will lie with small weight upon the consciences of his people. Note, 3. The special duty he commanded them to the practice and performance of, namely, to excommunicate scandalous and disorderly persons from their communion and familiar society; *That ye withdraw yourselves*. A man that is guilty of a notorious, scandalous sin, ought to be suspended from familiar converse and society with the saints, to shame him into repentance, before a public declarative excommunication casts him out of the church; *We command you to withdraw yourself from every brother*. Note, 4. The offended described, a brother: that is, a professor of Christianity, be he who he will, and let his rank and station be what it will, if he walks disorderly, like a soldier that keeps not rank and file, as the word signifies: if he walks not after the tradition which he has received of us, that is, plainly according to the rule and direction of the gospel, let him be avoided. Hence learn, That there is no church member, whose rank and station, whose quality and condition, doth exempt his disorderly, scandalous walking from ecclesiastical censure: *Withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly*.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: For we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you: 8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought: but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us.

In these verses the apostle plainly intimates, whom he meant by the *disorderly brother* mentioned in the foregoing verse: it is the idle person, called disorderly for this reason; because Almighty God having fitted man for, and ordained him to, labour, he that will not do so, deserts the order in which God has placed him, and thus renders himself disorderly. To condemn which practice, St. Paul propounds his own example to their consideration and imitation; declaring, that he did not eat any man's bread before he earned it, but wrought with his own hands in the day-time, and sometimes part of the night,

at his trade of tent-making, that he might not be chargeable to any of them: not but that he had power to demand maintenance for his ministry; but he chose rather to depart from his right, and to labour in his calling, to excite others to do the like. Note here, 1. That had not St. Paul laboured in his calling of tent-making, he had not been a disorderly person; but lest any should think so, he takes away and cuts off all occasion of suspicion, by working with his hands; his ministerial office would have freed him from the charge and imputation of idleness, and made maintenance from the church his due; but idleness, the apostle observed, was a growing sin, which needeth an example as well as doctrine to subdue it; and accordingly the apostle sets one, *I behaved myself not disorderly or idle amongst you, but wrought with labour and travail night and day.* Note, 2. It is commendable to follow good examples, but much more to set a good example: as ministers ought to be patterns, so people ought to be followers; and their sin will be much the greater, and their punishment much the sorer, who do not follow their ministers' doctrine, when they have seen it exemplified in their conversation. Note, 3. There have all along been some persons in the world who have looked upon the work of the ministry as a very easy calling, yea, as an idle calling, that a little time, a little pains and labour, is enough for it: whereas, the labour of the ministry in the exercise of the mind, may justly be esteemed the greatest of labours; yet we see people all along have not judged it so, but the ministers of Christ find it so. Note, 4. From the poverty of St. Paul's condition, that he had nothing before-hand, but was forced to earn his bread before he eat it; Learn, that it pleases God sometimes to measure out a very hard lot to his own children, and to give but little of earth to those who glorify him most upon earth; and those upon whom he intends to bestow extraordinary measures of glory in heaven, are cut short, very short of these outward comforts. Here behold St. Paul, a chosen vessel, one of the holiest men, and the most serviceable man that lived in the world in his time, yet without a penny in his purse, but what he wrought for with his hands, nay, working night and day for bread! Lord! how endearing are thy children's obligations to thy goodness, for their easy and plentiful circumstances in the world! what a favour it is to have fulness upon earth whilst we live, and the assurance of thy everlasting fruition when we die!

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

Observe here, 1. The solemn charge given by the apostle for every man to follow some lawful calling, and be found in the way of an industrious diligence; if any (being able) will not work, let him not eat (any part of the church's charity). So that the sin of idleness was directly contrary to the apostle's command, and to the apostle's example. Mark, It is not those that cannot work, but those that will not, whom the apostle excludes from the church's charity: poor men that will not work when they can, do forfeit the bread of charity from men; the rich men that live idly, do by that sin forfeit their food to God, yea, even their lives and their souls too; *if any man would not work, neither should he eat.* Observe, 2. The apostle exhorts every man to eat his own bread: implying, that the bread of idleness is stolen bread; idle persons shall be judged as thieves, though they eat that which was freely given them; drones deserve no honey, what they eat is stolen from the industrious bee; that is truly our bread which we labour for ourselves, or recompense those who get it for us by their labour. God has sent no man into the world to be idle; but as the providence of God disposes of every man, though he has never so much worldly wealth, yet he must be some way useful and serviceable in his generation. Observe, 3. One of the bad effects of idleness pointed at by our apostle; namely, an intermeddling (as busy-bodies) in other men's matters: an idle person that doeth nothing to any good purpose, yet has a deal of business to answer for, done to very bad purpose; not for labouring, but busy trifling, the busy-body's business is very unprofitable business; the mind of man cannot be wholly idle, but must be employed in something, if not in doing good, of necessity in contriving evil; usually none are so busy in other men's matters as they that neglect their own; those disorderly persons, who did not work at all, yet were busy-bodies, and as such censured by our apostle: *I hear there are some among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies.*

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. 14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Observe here, 1. How far St. Paul was from the censoriousness and uncharitableness of those men who condemn a whole society, a communion, a church in general, for the miscarriages of some particular persons in it. *I hear*, says he, *there are some that walk disorderly*, but ye, brethren, are free from these misdemeanors; you are painful in your employments, diligent in your callings, charitable in your distributions: be not weary in these instances of your duty, but persevere in well-doing. When the ministers of Christ reprove the stubborn and disobedient for the neglect of their duty, they forget not to encourage and exhort the faithful and obedient to a persevering diligence in their known duty. Observe, 2. He directs them how to manage refractory persons, such as remained contumacious and disobedient to the admonitions given by this epistle; continuing disorderly, and refusing to labour; his advice is twofold, he tells them what he would have them not do, and what he would have them do, to such. 1. Negatively, What they should not do; namely, not to cut them off from the church by excommunication, despairing of their repentance and reformation: extreme rigour is offensive to God, and injurious to the church, as well as too much lenity and forbearance. 2. Positively, He exhorts that they consider them as lapsed brethren, and treat them accordingly, as those that desire and endeavour to reduce and reform them, in order to which he directs, first, to note or mark the disorderly persons; that is, set a note of shame upon them. Next, to avoid all intimacy and familiarity with them. Lastly, to admonish them of their duty, that they may be brought, if possible, to repentance.

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.

Our apostle being now to take his leave of the Thessalonians, closes his epistle with prayer. Where note, 1. The mercy prayed for, *peace*; peace with God, peace with conscience, peace and unity among themselves as Christians, peace with the men of the world, strangers, yea, enemies to Christianity. Note, 2. The person

prayed to, *The Lord of peace*; understand Jesus Christ, the prince of peace, the purchaser of peace, the procurer of peace, the preserver of peace. Note, 3. The perpetuity of the mercy prayed for, *The Lord give you peace*, not for a short time, but for continuance, *always*, that is, at all times, and in all places, and with all persons. Note, 4. The way and manner of obtaining this and all other blessings, it must be in the use of means: *The Lord give you peace by all means*, that is, in the use of all lawful and laudable means. Learn hence, 1. That the Lord himself is the author, procurer, and preserver of all that peace which his people enjoy; and therefore his people may boldly trust him for peace and safety, who is, and will be styled, *The Lord of peace*. Learn, 2. That such as will obtain this blessing of peace, must pray for it, and endeavour after it in a diligent use of all lawful means, which is the usual way and method in which God dispenses it. Learn, 3. That it is a lasting peace, a peace *always*, amongst all persons, and at all times, that a Christian should pray for and endeavour after, that it may be enjoyed without cessation, and without interruption; *The Lord of peace himself give you peace always, by all means*.

—The Lord be with you all. 17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write, 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Observe here, 1. That in the former part of the verse he had prayed for peace on behalf of these Thessalonians, and this prayer was put up to Jesus Christ: *the Lord of peace, give you peace*: which, by the way, is a strong argument for the divinity of Christ, for none but God is to be prayed to, none but God can give peace, *Isa. lvii. 19. I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace*. Our apostle now having prayed for peace, next prays for the presence of God: *The Lord give you peace, the Lord be with you all*. Learn hence, That God's gracious presence with his people in any plentiful measure, is annexed to their peaceable frame of spirit, and to their serious endeavours after peace and love, after unity and concord, among themselves: and the contrary spirit and temper grieves the good spirit of God, and provokes him to withdraw his quickening and comforting presence from his people; for these two petitions seem to have mutual dependency upon each other. *The Lord give you peace, and the Lord be with you all*. Observe, 2. That the salutation written

with his own hand respects his own writing, which did serve as a token or certain mark whereby his own epistles were distinguished from all counterfeits. The sending of salutations, either by word or writing, that we may thereby testify our sincere affection to absent friends, is not a matter of decency only, but of duty; not of compliment barely, but of conscience. *The salutation of Paul with mine own hand.* Observe, 3. His usual valediction and farewell wish, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be with you all, Amen.* As if he had said, "May the gracious and undeserved favour of God in Christ, with all the fruits and effects, the benefits and advantages of it, be conveyed to you all, without exception, and be the portion and privilege of every

soul of you; and in testimony both of my affectionate desire and assured confidence, I say, *Amen*, so be it, so let it be. Learn hence, that there is an inexhaustible fountain of rich grace in Christ, and so copious are the streams of spiritual blessings which flow from it, that wish we never so much to others, yet there still remaineth enough for ourselves. St. Paul, who wisheth all grace to the Thessalonians, knew very well there was enough both for himself and them: and that how large a measure soever was bestowed upon them, there would not be the less remaining for himself; therefore doth he thus close and conclude his epistle, saying, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

THE
FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO
TIMOTHY.

Timotheus, or Timothy, is the name of the person to whom St. Paul directs this and the following Epistle; a name given him by his parents, to testify their pious desire that this their son should fear and honour God, according to the signification of his name.

His grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, bred him up in the knowledge of the scriptures from a child; he became first a disciple, and then the companion of St. Paul; was ordained by him, was very assisting to him, and inexpressibly dear to this great apostle, who knew how to value true worth in what age soever he found it; insomuch that St. Paul seldom mentions his name but with a mark of honour and esteem, calling him his son, his dearly beloved son, his faithful fellow-labourer, &c. He was a person of eminent gifts, and of a gracious disposition, but of a sick and weakly constitution: and having entered very young into the work of the ministry, St. Paul thought fit, in his absence from him, to write two epistles to him, and to all succeeding ministers of the gospel after him, directing how to demean and behave themselves in their ministerial function.

In these two Epistles, and that to Titus, we have a collection of canons truly apostolical, directing all bishops and pastors of the church how to govern themselves, and how to guide their people.

CHAP. I.

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, *which is our hope*;

Observe here, 1. St. Paul asserts his apostolical authority, calling himself an *apostle*; not that Timothy questioned it, but he writes it for their sakes over whom he was now presiding at Ephesus, that neither ministers nor people might despise what Timothy did, it being enjoined both him and them by so great an authority as was that of an apostle; *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ*. Observe 2. What authority St. Paul had for executing this office of an apostle: it was *by the commandment of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*, that is, by the appointment, injunction, ordination, and immediate commission, of the Father and of Christ, by his voice from heaven, as the rest of the apostles were called by a voice from Christ on Earth. In 1 Cor. i. 1, he is said to be called by the will of God; not by his permissive will barely, but by his preceptive will particularly, Observe, 3. The title given to our Lord Jesus Christ; he is styled our *hope*, that is, the author of our hope, the object of our hope, the purchaser of what we hope for, the declarer

to us of the hopes of glory expected by us. Where note, That our Lord Jesus Christ is undoubtedly and undeniably God, because he is our hope and trust: now if he were no more than a man, though never so excelling, to make him our hope would be to make ourselves miserable; for *curst is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm*. Jer. xvii. 5.

2 Unto Timothy, *my own son* in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

Observe here, 1. That endearing title which our apostle gives to Timothy, he calls him his son, his own son, his own son *in the faith*: because, as some think, converted by him to the Christian faith; others, that he was more thoroughly instructed, edified, and encouraged, by St. Paul, but converted before; possibly also he may call him his son, because he was as assisting to him, as obsequious and observing of him, as a son is to a father, he being a young man, and the apostle now aged; or it may be he calls him his son, because he resembled him in faith and doctrine, preaching and conversation, as a son resembled a father in face and manners. Consider Timothy as a spiritual son to St.

Paul, begotten to the faith by him, and then the note is this, that the ministers of Christ cannot but bear a fervent and affectionate love to those that are their spiritual children, their sons in the faith, and converted to Christ by their ministry; consider him as an assistant to St. Paul, a co-worker and fellow-labourer with him in the work of the gospel, and thus affectionately beloved by him, and we may learn for our instruction, how fervently the ministers of Christ should love one another, speak respectfully of each other, secure the reputation one of another, strengthen each other's hearts in the work of God. We have little, God knows, very little love from the world: Lord, how sad is it that we should yet have less one for another! See how the heart of St. Paul and his assistant Timothy were knit together in love like father and son, to the great reputation, as well as the successful furtherance of the gospel.

3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine. 4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith; *so do.*

Note here, 1. The tender care which St. Paul took of the new planted church at Ephesus; when his office called him into Macedonia, he leaves Timothy behind him at Ephesus, to water what he had planted, and to build upon that foundation which he had laid; *When I went into Macedonia, I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus.* Note, 2. The charge and command which St. Paul left with Timothy at his departure from him, to take care that no new or strange doctrine be taught, or any other doctrine received by the church, than what was delivered by him: *Charge some that they teach no other doctrine.* But who are these? Very probably they were the judaizing teachers, who strenuously endeavoured to corrupt the purity, and deprave the simplicity of the gospel. Thence learn, 1. That though the doctrine of Christ and his apostles was abundantly sufficient to salvation, yet the church of Christ, even in the earliest days of Christianity, were in very great danger of being corrupted early by other doctrines than those delivered by them. Learn, 2. That it is the great duty, and ought to be the special care, of the ministers of God, that no new or strange doctrine be broached in the church of Christ; *I besought thee—that thou mightest*

charge some that they teach no other doctrine. But a farther and more particular charge is given, verse 4, that the church at Ephesus give not heed to *fables* or *endless genealogies*, which rather occasion wrangling disputes, than tend to edification in faith and holiness. By *fables*, we may understand vain and idle speculations, Jewish scruples, frivolous observances: whatsoever in preaching is delivered by us, which doth not answer the great end of preaching, namely, to build up men in faith and holiness, is trifling, and not preaching; what we deliver signifies no more than a fable, or an imaginary tale that is told. But what were these endless genealogies here spoken of? *Ans.* Not scripture genealogies, for those are not vain, but useful; not endless, but determinate; but these were endeavours of some particular persons, who, that they might have a pretence to claim kindred with Christ, did make their genealogies endless, drawing down their line of descent from David, &c.; or else endeavoured to prove themselves sons of Abraham and Isaac, privileges which they highly valued themselves upon, and rested in, saying, *We have Abraham to our Father.* Whatever they were, our apostle charges Timothy, that the church at Ephesus give no heed to them, nor to the preachers of them; and the reason is given, because they only occasion disputes, and tend not to edification.

5 Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: 6 From which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling: 7 Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

In these words our apostle smartly reflects upon the judaizing teachers, who were so zealous for their ceremonial law, that they mingled works with faith in the point of justification: the apostle tells them that the end of the law, aye, and of the gospel too, is love; the end, that is, the aim, the scope, the design, the perfection and consummation, the perfecting end; the sense is, that all the duties which the law of God and the gospel of Christ do enjoin, are designed only as means to advance and perfect our love both to God and man; the end of all Christ's doctrine is charity, or the bringing of men to love God and their neighbour. Observe next, the apostle describes the nature and quality of that

love which is the end and design, the intention and perfection, of the law, and the fountain from whence this love must spring and flow, namely, from a pure heart, or heart purified by the Spirit of Christ; from a *good conscience*, or a conscience purified by the blood of Christ; and from a faith unfeigned: implying, That love either to God or man is not sincere, unless it proceed from a clean heart, and is accompanied with an holy and innocent life, and has faith for the root and principle from which it flows. Observe lastly, How he taxes these judaizing and false teachers, with swerving from charity, purity, and faith, and turning aside to vain janglings; and that whilst they affect to be thought learned teachers, and expounders of the law, they betray their ignorance, not understanding either what they say, or whereof they affirm.

8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;

Lest any should have apprehended, from the reflection he made upon the teachers of the law in the foregoing verse, that he did disparage and undervalue the law itself, our apostle in this verse declares, that the law, rightly understood and preached, was very good, given for, and serves unto, excellent purposes, if we use it lawfully; that is, as we ought to use it, as God intended it, namely, as a perfect rule of life to direct us in our obedience to God, but not so good as to expect justification by it; not good in opposition to the gospel, but in subserviency to the gospel; *The law is good, if used lawfully.* Observe here, 1. Something implied, namely, that the law of God may be used unlawfully. But how and when may it be said to be so? *Ans.* When it is converted to unprofitable disputes, as was the case here; when men oppose it to Christ, when they seek justification by it, and the like. Observe, 2. Something expressed, namely, That the law of God, considered in itself, is good and excellent; it is good in regard of its author, it hath the authority of God instamped upon it; good in regard of the matter contained in it; good in regard of the end of it, to lead us unto Christ, *Rom. x. 4. Christ is the end of the law*; good in regard of the use of it, and that, 1. To the ungodly, to restrain them from sin, to convince them of sin, to condemn them for sin. 2. To the godly, to discover sin more clearly, and more fully to drive them out of themselves, and from all expectation of righteousness and justification by any thing in themselves, or done by themselves; or to cause them to put the higher value,

esteem, and price, upon Jesus Christ, and the benefits received by him. Thus the law is good: and if so, woe to the Antinomians, who deny the use and excellency of the holy law of God, who vilify it, trample upon it, and, because it is not good for justification, affirm it is not good at all. What, is not gold good, because you can not eat it for food? It was never intended for that purpose: Is not obedience to the law as an eternal rule of holy living, and good works, agreeable to the demands of the law, necessary and good, though they never had the impress of God's ordination for our justification in his sight, he having provided a perfect and spotless righteousness for that purpose, which is highly pleasing to him? Lord! in the day when thou shalt come to plead with the world for transgressing thy law, how shall these men, who with tongue and pen have cried down the use and excellences of thy law, show their heads before thee?

9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 10 For whore-mongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

Our apostle here declares the persons, 1. whom the law was not made for; and, 2. them for whom it was made. It was not made for a righteous man, that is, say some, it was not made for him as a burden, to be an uneasiness to him, because he has a love to it, a delight in it, and does voluntarily conform himself to the observations of it; others say thus, The law was not made for a righteous man, that is, the righteous man is not under the coercive or vindictive, but directive, power of the law only: he is not under the curse of the law actually, though all are under it meritoriously; and accordingly the law was never made to terrify, and affrighten, and condemn them. Next the apostle declares for whom, for what persons, and for what purposes, the law was made, intended, and designed; namely, for restraining and condemning first, in general, all lawless persons, sons of Belial, as the scripture calls them, that is, men without yoke; the moral law in general is a rule of holy living, and the gospel in particular is Christ's yoke; now such as will not wear

the yoke of Christ, must expect no benefit by the cross of Christ: then he instances in particular, what and whom the law was made for, namely, to deter and restrain persons from all impiety and profaneness, from all disobedience and stubbornness, from murder and manslaughter, from sodomy, from whoredom, and all manner of uncleanness, either natural or unnatural, from theft, from perjury, from lying and falsehood; and, summarily, to curb and restrain wicked men from the practice of every thing which is contrary to the pure and holy nature of God. Learn hence, That there is such a propensity and inclination in the corrupt and depraved nature of man to the practice of all sins, even the greatest, the vilest, and the worst of sins, that the law of God, with all its threatened punishments, is not sufficient to deter, to terrify, or restrain sinners from the commission of them; but such as will not be under the restraining, must lie under the condemning, power of the law.

11 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. 12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry:

Note here, 1. The title given to the gospel: it is called the glorious gospel of the blessed God: partly, because the glorious attributes and excellences of God are more resplendent in the gospel, than in the law of God; as also because the gospel brings more honour and glory to God than all the works of creation put together. Note, 2. He styles God the giver of that gospel, the blessed God; to signify thereby unto us his transcendent mercy and excelling goodness, in that being infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself and his divine perfections, and incapable of any profit from, or advantage by, his creatures, he was yet pleased to give us his Son, his gospel, his Holy Spirit, to qualify us for, and bring us to, the enjoyment of himself: According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Note, 3. What humble and thankful returns St. Paul makes to Christ for the high honour, the rich and special favour, conferred upon him, in calling him to dispense this glorious gospel, in calling him to it, in enabling him for it, and rendering him faithful and successful in it: *I thank Christ Jesus, who enabled me, and counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.* Where note, That all the fidelity, ability, zeal, and courage, which the apostle had exercised in the whole course of his ministry, is attributed and

ascribed unto Christ, and not to himself; his faithfulness was not the cause or motive, but effect and fruit, of the grace of God in calling him to the ministry, 1 Cor. vii. 25, having obtained mercy to be faithful. Had our Saviour only discovered this faithfulness in him, and not conferred it upon him, there had not been such reason for this affectionate thanksgiving, which here we find from our apostle: *I thank Christ who hath enabled me, counting me faithful.*

13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, and in unbelief.

Note here, 1. What a prodigious sinner St. Paul represents himself before conversion; *I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious*; a blasphemer, the highest sin he could commit against God; a persecutor, the highest sin he could commit against saints; injurious, the highest wickedness against mankind: sins of such aggravated and accumulated guilt, that they wanted but one ingredient, namely, sufficient knowledge, to render them the sin against the Holy Ghost. Be astonished, O heavens, at the great and infinite mercy of God towards great sinners! Even persecutors and blasphemers may be, and sometimes are, converted, and brought home to God. Note, 2. The reason assigned by him, why such distinguishing mercy was dispensed to him: he obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. The word *because* doth not import or imply that ignorance in the apostle was the proper cause of mercy in God, but that it made St. Paul a more capable subject for receiving mercy than he would have been, if he had maliciously sinned against knowledge; nor that St. Paul by less sinning did merit the mercy of God, but his ignorance and unbelief being in a sort invincible, through the prejudice of education, they did much abate the malignity of his sin; for he was bred a Pharisee, which was a sect that had an implacable enmity against Christ and his holy religion. Observe lastly, The end and design of St. Paul in relating that his bitter persecution of Christianity was in the time of his ignorance, and not done deliberately, knowingly, and maliciously; partly, to justify the divine mercy and free grace of God, which pardoned his fury, his rage, and madness against Christ and his saints; for, had he done thus deliberately and maliciously, for secular ends and worldly advantages, it had been the sin against the Holy Ghost, which was un-

pardonable; and partly he mentions his ignorance, to prevent the abuse of the divine mercy in men, and to let the world know that none might or ought to take encouragement from his example, to be of a persecuting spirit, and yet hope for mercy, when at the same time they sin against light and knowledge. I would to God the persecuting spirit amongst us would consider this, which is as bitter as ever in the breasts of some against their protestant brethren; but, blessed be God, legally restrained. They cannot now afflict those whom they do not affect; yet it is evident they do not rejoice, and are not so thankful for their own liberty as they should, because those whom they hate enjoy theirs: their case is vastly different from our apostle's; they cannot pretend to do it ignorantly, though through infidelity in some sort they may.

14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Still our apostle goes on magnifying the transcendent mercy and abundant grace of God, that called him first to be a Christian, and then an apostle; and he shows, that this great mercy of God had great effects in him of faith and love, both towards God and his saints. Where note, how St. Paul after his conversion abounded and excelled in those graces which were opposite and contrary to the sins committed in his carnal and unregenerate state: he abounds in faith, in opposition to his former unbelief; and in love, in opposition to his former rage and cruelty. A Christian's fruitfulness in grace and holiness after his conversion, ought to bear some proportion to his unfruitfulness in a sinful state, before conversion; the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love; he now glorifies God by excelling in those graces which were opposite to his former sins.

15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: of whom I am chief.

Observe here, 1. What an humble apprehension this great apostle had of himself, though then the greatest of saints in the esteem of others, yet the chiefest of sinners in his own account: for he doth not say, I was the chief of sinners, but *I am so*; notwithstanding his repentance and remission, still he reflects upon his former unregenerate state and sinful condition. Learn hence, That when sin is mercifully

pardoned, and cast behind God's back, the penitent sinner will and ought to set it continually before his own face, to keep him humble, sensible of, and thankful for, the rich grace of God dispensed to him, and received by him: *Sinners of whom I am chief.* Observe, 2. A most comfortable revelation made by the gospel concerning the redemption and salvation of a lost world by our Lord Jesus Christ. *He came into the world to save sinners.* Where note, That the promised Messiah is come into the world; that Jesus Christ is that promised Messiah: therefore he was before he came, his divine nature pre-existing from all eternity; and in the fullness of time he assumed the human nature into an union with his Godhead. Note farther, That the design of his coming was to save sinners; therefore if man had not sinned, Christ had not come into the world: what need of a mediator, had there been no breach! No need of a physician, had there been no disease. Farther, it was not absolutely necessary that Christ should come into the world to save sinners; but supposing God's purpose of saving sinners by way of a price or satisfaction, Christ's coming into the world was indispensably necessary; for no mere creature could lay down a price satisfactory for the salvation of lost man. Observe, 3. The truth and certainty, together with the worth and excellency, of the gospel revelation: *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation*; for what is the gospel but a revelation of pardon to condemned malefactors, a declaration of peace to proclaimed enemies, a proclamation of liberty to enslaved captives, an offer of cure to diseased persons! Oh! with what fervent zeal should this acceptable doctrine be preached by us, and embraced by our people; *That Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners!*

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Note here, That God is pleased sometimes to magnify his mercy in the conversion and salvation of the most notorious sinners, that so the greatest of sinners may take encouragement from thence to hope and trust in our Lord Jesus Christ for pardoning mercy; thus here, this great blasphemer and persecutor was received to mercy, for a pattern and example to all such sinners as should hereafter forsake their evil and wicked ways, and give up

themselves sincerely to the obedience of the gospel; *For this cause I obtained mercy.* Such a conspicuous example of Christ's clemency and grace towards so great a sinner, whom he not only pardoned, but preferred to the dignity of an apostle, and sent forth to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, would be a strong motive to the Gentiles to receive the gospel with faith and obedience: there could be no reason for any of them to despair of mercy, when they saw such a pattern, such an illustrious instance of pardoning mercy before their eyes: *In me first Jesus Christ showed forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him.*

17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Our apostle being ravished with a sweet sense of the greatness of God's pardoning mercy towards himself, concludes this whole matter with a pathetic doxology, and an affectionate thanksgiving unto God. As if he had thus said, "The sense of the afore named unspeakable mercy calleth up my soul to speak with joy the praises of our God, who is eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only God, absolutely wise, over angels and all creatures: to him be honour and glory, for ever and ever."

18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy,—

What charge? To stay at Ephesus, say some, for the benefit of the church there: to charge the false teachers not to give heed to fables, say others; to keep the doctrine committed to him by St. Paul, as a faithful minister and soldier of Jesus Christ, against all opposition: these were the charges given.

—According to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

Here St. Paul encourages Timothy to go on in the course of his ministry with courage and faithfulness, according as it had been foretold or prophesied he should do. Here note, That amongst the gifts of prophecy, which were found in the apostle's time, and the discerning of spirits, this was one, to foretell and choose out persons meet and fit to do God service in the ministry. Timothy was thus chosen by prophecy, that is, by the direction of the Spirit of God; he was designed and notified by the Spirit of prophecy, and therefore the apostle bids him, as it had been foretold he

should be a faithful minister, to approve himself to be such: *According to the prophecies which went before on thee, war a good warfare.* Learn hence, That young ministers ought to take heed, that what hopes, expectations, and good opinions others have had of them, and what prayers, promises, and engagements have been made for them, may not be made void, but made good by them, in the future course of their ministry.

19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith having made shipwreck:

St. Paul had exhorted Timothy in the foregoing verse to *war a good warfare*; here he directs him to two weapons which he would have him use in that warfare, namely, *faith, and a good conscience*; neither will do alone: not faith without a good conscience, nor a good conscience without faith; hold both faith in thy teaching, and a good conscience in thy practice: hold them fast; for faith stands with a good conscience, and falls with a bad one. Learn hence, That in the most perilous times, when some lose their graces and comforts, their present peace and future hopes, that we may not lose what we have on earth, and what we look for in heaven, one continual care must be, to get and keep, to have and hold, faith and a good conscience. And mark the encouragement given to exercise this care; some, through the neglect of it, *concerning faith have made shipwreck.* Our life is a sea-faring condition; a good conscience is the ark in which we are secure, made by God's own direction, (as was that of Noah,) and pitched within and without, as was his: a window it had in the top to let in the light of heaven, but not the least crack or crevice below, to let in a drop of guilt, or endanger its own safety: it shoots off all the showers that fall downwards, and all the floods that rage upwards. Such a security is an innocent mind and a clear conscience; but if we do not hold fast a good conscience, but let it go, we have seen the last of faith; it sinks, it shipwrecks presently. *Concerning faith have made shipwreck.*

20 Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander;

That is, of the number of those who have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience are these two men. They made shipwreck of faith. But how: by renouncing Christianity expressly! No:

but implicitly, by denying the resurrection, and maintaining such doctrines as utterly subverted and totally overthrew the faith.

—Whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

That is, whom I have inflicted the church's censure of excommunication upon, cast them out of the church, and delivered to Satan as God's executioner, who oft-times tormented the person with grievous diseases and bodily pains, called elsewhere, *the destruction of the flesh*, 1 Cor. v. 5. Learn hence, That excommunication rightly administered is a very solemn ordinance, a shutting out of heaven him who is justly cast out of the church's communion here on earth. But observe, The charitable intention of the apostle in denouncing this sentence of excommunication; it was, *That they might learn not to blaspheme*. Mark, it was none of Satan's desire, but the apostle's that they might learn not to blaspheme. Satan was then God's executioner, when the church wanted the countenance of the Christian magistrate; and his design was destruction, but the apostle's was reformation; not to ruin, but reclaim. Learn, That the end of the church's censure, in particular of excommunication, is not to serve to the destruction of the censured, much less to the private revenge of the censorer; but to reform and reclaim the offender, that others may be warned, and the infection stayed: *Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

CHAP. II.

The first chapter of this epistle acquainted us, that Timothy was left by St. Paul at Ephesus, to manage and superintend the affairs of the church in that city, whilst the apostle was absent from them, planting and propagating the gospel in other places; this second chapter directs Timothy to the management of his duty; and first, he exhorts him to take special care that prayers and supplications be publicly made, and so far as it was in his power privately also, for all men. Whence we may learn, that a religious and constant performance of the duty of prayer by all persons, publicly and privately, ought to be a special part of a minister's care and concern. His endeavour must be to bring his people to a great sense of this part of their duty to God their maker, to bow their knees in public, private, and secret, before him; for to live without prayer, is to live without God in the world.

I EXHORT therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may

lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.

Observe here, 1. The duty which Timothy is exhorted to take care of, and that is, of the duty of public prayer. I exhort thee, that supplications, prayers, and intercessions, with thanksgivings, be publicly made: prayer being a special and principal part of public worship, the minister of God must be assiduous and constant in it; deprecating evils threatened, supplicating for mercies wanted, interceding on the behalf of others, and giving thanks for blessings received. Observe, 2. For whom we are to pray in general, *for all men*. Because we cannot pray acceptably for ourselves, if we pray only for ourselves; this is the noblest exercise of charity, and which God has put in the power of the poorest man upon earth to exercise: *Let supplications and prayers be made for all men*. Observe, 3. For whom we are more especially and in the first place to pray: for kings, and all in authority, who then were pagans and persecutors. Mark, He says not for lawful and rightful kings, but for such as have the pre-eminence and power in their hands, for all power is of God, *And the powers that be, are ordained of God*, Rom. xiii. 2. But why first for kings? Because they are such great instruments of good to mankind, because they most want our prayers, as they encounter with more difficulties, are exposed to more dangers, and are liable to greater temptations, than other men. Observe, 4. The arguments which the apostle offers to engage us to this duty, *That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty*; that is, that we may be secured in the quiet and peaceable possession of our civil rights and interests, and that we may be protected in the free exercise of our religion, and in the practice of godliness; for though no prince can take our religion from us, if we resolve to keep it, yet they may disturb us in the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of it; and therefore it is our interest as well as our duty to pray for kings, and all that are in authority.

3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Our apostle subjoins his reasons for our praying for all men, because Christ came into the world to save all men, chap. i. 15. Because it is the desire of God, as well as the design of Christ, that all men should be saved, and because such prayers are good and acceptable in the sight of

God. Learn hence, 1. That to pray for all men, as well enemies as friends, especially and particularly for rulers and magistrates, is good, acceptable, and agreeable to Almighty God, as all acts of obedience to his commanding will are: *This is good and acceptable in the sight of God.* Learn, 2. That it is not only all sorts of men that God and Christ desire should be saved, but our Lord willed, together with his Father, the salvation of all men in general, so far as to make a sacrifice sufficient for all, if they repent and believe, and to offer a general pardon to all on condition of acceptance, and to send his ministers amongst all with the word of reconciliation, accompanying it with an hearty desire that all would accept of it; in short, what Christ offered to all, he undoubtedly purchased for all; but he offers to all pardon and life upon condition of acceptance, therefore he is so far willing that all men should be saved. Learn, 3. The means and method by which and in which God would have all men to be saved, namely, by coming to the knowledge of the truth; it is evidently false then, which some confidently affirm, that a man may be saved in any religion: no, he cannot come to salvation but by the knowledge of the truth; without the knowledge of God, without faith in Christ, where he has been revealed, and without obedience to the gospel, where it has been made known, there is no possibility of salvation; God would have all men to be saved, by coming to the *knowledge of the truth.*

5 For *there is* one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus: 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

The apostle's argument runs thus: We ought to pray for all, because there is one God who is good to all, and one Mediator between God and mankind, who took upon him the common nature of all men, and gave himself a satisfactory and sufficient ransom for all, which was in due time testified and borne witness to by us his apostles. Learn hence, 1. That the only way of friendly intercourse between God and fallen man, is by and through a Mediator. God cannot look upon fallen men out of a Mediator, but as rebels, traitors, and objects of his vindictive wrath; nor can fallen man, without a Mediator, look up to God, but as a provoked majesty, an angry judge, and a consuming fire. Learn, 2. That there is no other Mediator between God and man, but Jesus Christ, who was both God and man; for though the apostle

calls him the *Man* Christ Jesus, this is not added to exclude the divine nature from the Mediatorship, but emphatically to declare that nature in which he gave himself a ransom for us; the human nature is the matter of our ransom; the divine nature gave worth and value to it; Christ suffered being man, and satisfied being God. Learn, 3. That this one Mediator, Jesus Christ, gave himself a ransom for all; whoever perishes under the gospel, it is not because no ransom was paid for him, nor because it was not sufficient for him, for it is most notorious that God has issued forth an universal act of grace, offering pardon of sin and eternal salvation to all men without exception, living under the gospel, upon condition of their believing acceptance; if they reject and refuse it, 'tis to their unutterable and inevitable condemnation.—Learn, 4. That Christ's mediation and intercession is founded upon redemption; because he gave himself a ransom for all, therefore is he, and he only, qualified to intercede for all, in virtue of that sacrifice which he offered for the salvation of mankind: therefore the distinction of the church of Rome, between a mediator of redemption, and a mediator of intercession, is groundless: for who dares plead with an offended God, as an intercessor on the behalf of sinners, that has not first, as a redeemer, satisfied the justice of God for sin! As there was no redemption wrought by any, so there is no intercession to be made by any, but by Christ; as there is but *one* God, so but *one* Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not,) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. 8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle declares his authority to publish the gospel to the Gentiles, and his integrity in the publication of it: I was ordained an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. Observe, 2. That according to St. Paul's commission, he gave directions to all sorts of persons for the regular performance of their duty. And first concerning the duty of prayer: *I will*, that is God by me declares his will, *that all men pray*; that they pray every where, in the public assemblies, in their private families and apartments; *lifting up the hands*, in token of expecting to receive an answer from heaven. *Lifting up holy hands*; let their prayers be holy

accompanied with faith and charity; *without wrath and doubting*; a peaceable heart is as necessary in prayer as a pure hand. 'Tis in vain to ask in prayer the favour of God, with anger and revenge in our hearts against man; to pray with doubting is opposed to faith; to pray in wrath, is opposed to charity. As if the apostle had said, "Pray both in actual faith and love." There must be faith in prayer, otherwise we cannot lift up holy hands without doubting: there must be love, otherwise we cannot lift up holy hands without wrath. *Therefore, says the apostle, I will that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.* He and his service must be holy, that will serve God acceptably.

9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

The next apostolical precept here given is to women, concerning their apparel and attire, that at all times, but especially in public worship, they use such apparel as becometh modest and chaste women, expressing by their garb the inward gravity and modesty of their minds; not like proud and alluring persons, with embroidered hair, gold, and pearl, to attract the eyes and hearts of the simple. Note, 1. That the attire which all persons wear, ought to be such as may answer the end for which apparel was appointed, which was to hide and shroud our nakedness, for differing and distinction of sexes, as also for distinguishing between the qualities and ranks of persons. Garments also are for defence and protection, and for decency and ornament. Note, 2. That though persons of quality are not prohibited to wear such garments, though costly, as becometh their degree, yet none are to study the external adorning of the body, so much as to neglect the inner man by good works. Note, 3. That all that attire is forbidden, (1.) Which suspected women use, either to provoke to lust in others, or to show inclinations to it in themselves. (2.) All such attire as by the richness and costliness of it shows pride and vanity of spirit, and an ambition to excel others: not but that there may be pride under mean apparel, and oft-times is. (3.) All such attire as is unsuitable either to the time or place of worship. Note, 4. That this precept ought not to be slighted by women, as of small moment; because

the two great apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, do both give it in charge unto them. Note, lastly, That the men are by no means to look upon themselves as unconcerned in this apostolical precept given to women. It is much more inexcusable in them to affect gaiety and gaudy dress; for it is vain and foolish, troublesome and uneasy, the nurse of idleness attended with luxury and wantonness, and very often with immodesty and lewdness; and is the great bane very often of justice and charity. How many are fine and gay, but at the expense, and sometimes at the ruin, of the poor tradesman. And how oft is that spent in vain decking, which ought to be laid out in the poor's clothing.

11 Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection. 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

Still our apostle is directing Timothy how persons should and ought to manage themselves in the public assemblies, and particularly how women ought to behave themselves at the time and in the place of worship. *Let, says he, the women in your assemblies, learn in silence, with all subjection to the better sex; for I suffer not a woman to teach publicly, and to usurp authority over the man, to whom God has given authority over her; but rather according to her duty, let her learn in silence.* Here note, 1. That it is only women's public teaching that is here forbidden; not their private teaching their children, or servants, or the younger women, or even their husbands themselves upon a fit occasion. *Acts xviii. 26,* we find Priscilla privately instructing Apollos. Note, 2. That none ought to teach but who have authority; and teaching is exercising that authority. A woman therefore teaching publicly, doth usurp an authority not due unto her. Note, 3. There were some women in the Jewish church endowed with extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and particularly with the gift of prophesying, who did teach publicly; as Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Anna. And it is probable, that the speaking of these extraordinary women encouraged others to do the like, whom the apostle here directs his speech against. *I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority, &c.*

13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived; but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression.

Here St. Paul offers a double argument

to enforce the duty of subjection upon the woman, and to prevent her usurping of authority over the man; namely, because the man was first in the creation: *Adam was first formed, then Eve, and the woman was first in the transgression. Adam was not deceived, that is, first and immediately deceived, but the woman being deceived, was first in the transgression*; she was therefore guilty of her own and her husband's transgression; and accordingly, not only by the law of her creation, but as a punishment for her transgression, God has placed her in a state of subjection, and given the man authority over her; which authority she usurps over him, whenever she undertakes to be a public teacher of him. These two considerations doth the apostle make use of, to humble the woman, and to keep her within the sphere of her proper duty.

14 Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

Our apostle having, in the preceding verse, acquainted us with the woman's sin, that she *was in the transgression*, and first in the transgression; in this verse he informs the woman of a part of her punishment for that her transgression; and that is, the severe pain and extreme peril of child-bearing. He acquaints her, 2. With her comfort and support under that punishment; and that is, a hope of salvation: *She shall be saved in child-bearing*. 3. With the condition upon which that hope of salvation is grounded and bottomed: *If she continue in faith and charity, and holiness with sobriety*. Learn, 1. That pain in child-bearing is a part of that punishment which was inflicted by God upon the woman for her first sin; and accordingly the woman's sorrow and sensible feeling of the pains of child-birth ought to bring to her remembrance her original and first transgression. Surely when the woman feels the original punishment, it ought to remind her of her original sin, as a child ought to remember his fault at that very instant when he is under his father's rod. Learn, 2. That the infliction of this punishment, (the pains of child-bearing,) even unto death, is and shall be no hinderance of the woman's eternal salvation, if there be found with her those holy qualifications and gracious conditions which the gospel requires; partly in regard to the relation which God stands in to her, partly in regard of the covenant which God has made with her. A child is as much a child under the rod as in the bosom; neither the father's stroke nor the child's grief can dissolve that rela-

tion. Learn, 3. That faith and charity, holiness and sobriety, with a perseverance therein, are the great conditions of the gospel, upon which the woman's eternal salvation in that hazardous condition doth depend. *She shall be saved in child-bearing, if she continue in faith and charity, and holiness with sobriety*. The words may also refer to the woman's temporal deliverance in the time of travail; and the sense runs thus: "She shall be saved in child-bearing, that is, she shall go through the pains of child-birth with safety, if she continue in faith, putting her trust in God for deliverance, in charity exercising compassion to those in the like condition; and in the exercise of temperance, sobriety, and chastity, according to her matrimonial vow."

CHAP. III.

The design of our apostle in this chapter is to instruct Timothy in one of the most important parts and duties of his office, namely, to take great care whom he did admit into the sacred function. And accordingly he gives him a catalogue of several qualifications, not fewer than sixteen, which ought to be found in the person whom he did ordain for public administration in the church of God. Thus he speaks, ver. 1.

THIS is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work;

Observe here, 1. Our apostle acquaints Timothy with the dignity, honour, and excellency of the sacred function: *He that desireth the office of a bishop*, that is, to rule and teach in the church of God, *he desireth a good work*, that is, honourable employment. As if our apostle had said, "Know, O Timothy, that as to the office of a bishop, whoever desireth it, doth desire a very great and excellent work; it is not a bare name, title, dignity, a place of honour and command; but a work, a work of vast importance, labour, and difficulty: take heed therefore whom thou dost admit, and of those that are also admitted into the sacred function, to consider the great weight of that important service, to enterprize it with extraordinary dread and caution, looking upon their office not with aspiring but tremendous thoughts:—for *who is sufficient for these things?*"

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

Here we have St. Paul's positive character of a bishop, and what he ought to be, who is admitted into that high and honourable office in the church of God: he ought to be *blameless*, a person free from scandal,

without any just ground of blame: the life of a bishop should shine so bright, that others may not only behold it, but admire it, and guide their lives by the example of it. *The husband of one wife*; that is, one at a time; not guilty of the sin of having many wives, or of putting away the wife by divorce, as the Jews frequently did for frivolous causes. Here note, 1. The apostle's command (that the bishop be the husband of one wife) doth not oblige him to marry, but it establishes the lawfulness of his marriage, if he sees sufficient reason for it. Nor, 2. Does the apostle here forbid successive marriages, as if when a bishop has married one wife, or more, he might not lawfully marry again; for this he elsewhere allows, 1 Cor. vii. 8. From this it may not be in a man's power to abstain: many lose their first, and sometimes their second wives, so soon, that were not after-marriages lawful, all the ends of marriage must be frustrate to them; yet may we suppose by these words, and many others, that St. Paul proposes a greater degree of chastity to church governors than to other persons. *Vigilant*, very diligent and watchful in the performance of his whole duty, not long absent from his flock, nor negligent when he is among them: *sober*, governing his passions and appetites, reducing those rebellious powers under the dominion of reason and religion: *of good behaviour*, in his words, in habit and garb, in his deeds and actions, neither proud and supercilious, nor morose and sour, but affable and easy, kind and courteous, of a composed temper and grave behaviour: *given to hospitality*, not to sensuality; it is not the keeping of a free table, and open house for all comers, which St. Paul points at; but charity in entertaining strangers, poor Christians that left their country by persecution, or such as traveled upon their lawful affairs from place to place; the free relieving of such as are necessitous and exposed to want and hardship, is the hospitality pointed at by our apostle: *apt to teach*, that is, both knowing and willing, able to teach, and forward to it, having both skill and will, ability and dexterity, for that part of his duty; one that is neither ignorant of his duty, nor negligent in the performance of it.

3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

The negative character of a bishop now follows, showing what he must not be. *Not given to wine*; that is, to much wine, no inordinate lover either of wine or strong drink, no wine-bibber, no sinner at wine in

his own house, much less at taverns and public houses: *no striker*, either with hands or tongue, no quarreller, that cannot keep his hand from hurting, no word-striker, no striker with the tongue, and passion, and anger; a word, we say, wounds deeper than a sword; the ministers of God may wound the consciences of men with the sword of the Spirit, but they must not wound the reputations of men with their own wrathful spirits; we must use our tongues rather to heal than wound, or if at any time to wound, it must be in order to healing: *not guilty of filthy lucre*; no inordinate lover of money, which makes a man base and sordid, both in getting, keeping, and spending: *but patient*, meek, and forbearing, not rigidly exacting his due, not acting *summo jure*, but rather parting with somewhat which in strictness may be his right for peace-sake; *not a brawler*, or contentious person, often engaged in law-suits, but of a mild and peaceable disposition; *not covetous*, or enslaved to the love of wealth; possess he may the good things of this life, but not be possessed by them.

4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

A bishop being a ruler in the church of God, Timothy is advised to choose such a one to rule in the church that well and wisely governs his own family, having his children in due subjection, and both he and they behaving themselves with becoming gravity; and St. Paul subjoins a reason for this apostolical injunction, arguing from the less to the greater, thus: "The church is a large family, the bishop's house a less; the former requires a greater skill in governing of it than the latter: if then a man cannot rule a less province, how shall he manage a greater? If he cannot keep up his authority with decency and becoming gravity in his own family, how shall such a one be thought fit to be entrusted with the care of the church of God?" Great are the obligations which lie upon the ministers of God, above all men, to guide and govern their own families, to keep their children in due subjection, and their servants in great order; because their family miscarriages reflect greatly upon their authority and prudence, and the world will pronounce them unfit for rule in the church of God, who cannot govern their own house. *If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the*

church of God? Learn hence, That he who knows how to rule his own house well, is in a good posture of spirit for public rule; the same wisdom, justice, and holiness for kind, but more extensive, acts in either sphere, and will regularly move in both.

6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

A *novice* signifies, a young plant; here, a young, raw, unexperienced person; yet not so much young in years as in knowledge; for Timothy himself was very young; not a novice in religion then, not one that is unexperienced in the mysteries of the gospel, undertaking to teach others before he has learnt himself. And the reason for this injunction is weighty; *Lest being puffed up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil*; implying, that young, raw, and unexperienced persons, when put into public office, are in very great danger of falling into the sin of pride, the devil's sin, and of exposing themselves to condemnation, the devil's punishment, because their knowledge is weaker, and their passions stronger, and their graces feeblor, and they want that experience which should consolidate their judgments, and are therefore in great danger of self-exalting; for none so proud and confident as the ignorant and injudicious. Note here, That when St. Paul says, *Lest he fall into the condemnation of the devil*, it is as if he had said, "Lest he be condemned for the same sin that the devil was condemned for, which was pride;" not that the devil will condemn him for his pride, for the more proud a man is, the more the devil approves him; nor is it the devil's office to condemn, but to execute; he is the executioner, not the judge; he will not condemn for sin, but he will eternally torment them whom God condemns.

7 Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil.

Note here, How needful it is for a minister to be of an untainted reputation; a bishop must be of good report, saith St. Paul; it is necessary for his own salvation that he be good, and for the salvation of others that he be accounted so: great is their sin, then, who go about to blast a minister's reputation, because something of reputation is absolutely necessary to render his ministry successful. Note farther, *He must have a good report of them that*

are without, that is, without the church; unbelieving Jews or Gentiles, with whom he formerly conversed; lest becoming contemptible, and so not able to perform his duty as he should, he give occasion to the heathen to blaspheme Christianity, and to reproach him for his former course of life.

8 Likewise *must* the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

Note here, 1. That there are but two sorts of fixed church-officers mentioned by St. Paul, bishops and deacons; as the church had its own bishop, so likewise its own deacons: these were at first instituted for the service of the poor; the alms of the church were brought to the altar, the deacons received them, and distributed them among the aged and impotent from house to house: now because they were thus employed, the apostle advised them to beware of those faults that are frequently committed in common conversation, as light and vain discourse, saying one thing to one person, and the contrary to another. *Let the deacons be grave*, not guilty of levity, but serious and composed, men of a modest and becoming carriage; *not double-tongued*, nor over-talkative persons, nor saying one thing to one person, and the contrary to another, according to the place or company they fell into; *not given to much wine*, not the thing, but the excess, is forbidden; *not greedy of filthy lucre*, seeking to get wealth by sordid ways and means.

9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

That is, they must be sound believers, and of an upright life, maintaining truth of doctrine and soundness of faith, by sincerity of heart and integrity of life.

10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless.

Here Timothy is directed not to put any person suddenly into the office of a deacon, but first to prove them for some considerable time; and their sufficiency being approved, let them be ordained, and use the office of a deacon.

11 Even so *must* their wives be grave, not slanderous, sober, faithful in all things.

In the original it runs, *Let the women*: by

which is meant either the deacons' wives, or the deaconesses, who were appointed to take care of the poor women, as the deacons were of the men; understand it of both; these qualifications are very excellent and well becoming of both; they ought to be grave and sober, not light and airy, no slanderers, not devils, says the original; the sense is, not railers, nor false accusers, but diligent and faithful in all business, and trusty in all affairs. It is not enough and sufficient that the ministers of the gospel themselves be of a grave and sober conversation, but their wives also must and ought to take special care that they demean themselves answerably to their place and station, and suitably to the character which their husbands bear; *so must their wives be grave.*

12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

That is, "Let not any such be admitted deacon who has more wives than one, or that hath injuriously put away one, and married to another; and let them show by the good government of their own children and household, that they are fit to govern the church of God." Note here, That the higher officers of the church were usually chosen out of the inferior; and accordingly, the qualifications for both offices, namely, that of bishops and deacons, are for the greatest part the same, both in this epistle and in that to Titus.

13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

That is, "Although the deacons be as servants to the bishops, yet such as use that office well, according to the foregoing rules, by so doing do purchase to themselves a good degree above the vulgar, and also have farther hopes of being advanced in the church to higher offices; and when they preach the word (as did Philip and Stephen) they might do it with great boldness, and with expectation of success, living suitably to the qualification of their function, and walking according to the rule of the gospel, which they professed and taught."

14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; 15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is

the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

As if the apostle had said, "I do hope to come to thee very shortly; but if I tarry long, or be prevented at last, as I am uncertain, I write these things to thee, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to converse in the house of God, in the church of the living God, in which thou art a pillar and firm buttress of the truth." Some, by the *pillar* here, will understand the church, as being the foundation on which the truth is built, and giving it authority; but she is therefore the church of Christ, because she holds the truth, and it is essential to her being to maintain and teach all necessary truths; she holds it forth, and publishes it to the world, sustaining it, and supporting it as a pillar doth the king's proclamation. The truth receives not its authority from the church, but the church receives authority by adhering to the truth. Others, by the *pillar*, understand Timothy; and that St. Paul is here exhorting, that according to his office Timothy should be a pillar and buttress of truth in the church. Hence, *Gal. ii. 9.* James, Cephas, and John are said to be pillars there, as is Timothy here; a pillar in the church, signifies a man that is well rooted and grounded, and strong in the faith; this he exhorts Timothy to be. Observe here, 1. The church's surpassing dignity: she is called the house of God, in which he dwells. God is present in all places, even in hell itself, by the immensity of his being; but the church is his palace, the place of his peculiar residence. Observe, 2. The ministers of the church's important duty, namely, as pillars to support, maintain, and uphold, the divine truth against all those that seek to corrupt and suppress the same. Be thou, *O Timothy*, in the church of God as the *pillar and ground of truth*.

16 And, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Our apostle having exhorted Timothy in the preceding verses to behave himself worthily in the church of God, and as a pillar, supporting, maintaining, and upholding the truths of God, in this verse he reckons up six principal heads of evangelical truth, which are to be asserted and defended by him; ushering them in with this preface, *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.* Learn, That our holy faith, our Christian religion, is a mystery, a great mystery, an unquestionable mys

tery, a mystery of godliness, a mystery hidden in God, *Eph. iii. 2*; hidden in Christ, *Col. iii. 3*. hidden in the scriptures, *Rev. iii. 18*: hidden in and under the types and shadows of the ceremonial law; nay, hidden even in the gospel itself, for we know but in part; and if Christianity be a mystery, then the knowledge of it is the effect of divine revelation and supernatural discovery, not to be known by the light or benefit of nature, but God reveals it to us by his Spirit. Farther, if it be a mystery, then the dispensation of it is a special favour, an arbitrary and voluntary discovery of it, to whom, when, and how far God himself pleases. Finally, if it be a mystery, then it is to be apprehended by faith, and not to be fathomed by reason: faith looks at *revelation*, reason calls for a demonstration; faith embraces like Abraham, what reason laughs at like Sarah. *Without controvery, great is the mystery of godliness.* This is St. Paul's magnificent preface, which requires not only the assent, but challenges the obedience and adoration of our faith. Observe next, The six principal heads of evangelical truth here reckoned up, for Timothy to study, to preach, and to defend. 1. *God was manifested in the flesh*; that is, the second person in the Godhead appeared in our human flesh and nature. Astonishing mystery! that the Creator of the world should become a creature, lodged in a stable, and cradled in a manger! The infinite Deity and finite flesh met in one person, and yet the Godhead not humanized, nor the humanity deified, but both invisibly conjoined; the human nature was united to the Godhead miraculously, assumed integrally, united inseparably. 2. *Justified in or by the Spirit*; that is, the Spirit was Christ's witness that he was no impostor or deceiver, but the promised and expected Messias, working all his miracles by the power of the Spirit, raising himself from the dead, and thereby declaring himself to be the Son of God with power, by the Spirit of holiness; and by sending the Spirit, after his ascension into heaven, down upon his disciples here on earth; thus the Spirit justified Christ really and truly to be what he professed himself to be, and sealed his doctrine to the world. 3. *Seen of angels*; they celebrated his birth, and gave notice of it to the world, ministered to him in the wilderness, succoured him in the garden, were present at his resurrection, accompanied him in his ascension. *Seen of angels.* Lord! what a stupendous sight was this; for man to see an angel is wonderful, but for an angel to see God become man was soul-amazing; they sang their *Gloria Patri*

at his birth, they beheld and applauded his happy victory over Satan in the desert. Oh! with what eyes did they look upon his bloody sweat in the garden! With what officiousness did they roll away the stone in the morning of the resurrection! And with what universal triumphs and acclamations did they accompany him to his celestial throne! 4. *Preached to the Gentiles*; the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile being broken down, Christ was by his commissioned apostles preached to the Gentile world: the Jews were once children, and we dogs; theirs was the bread, ours were the crumbs; but now we are fellow-commoners with them, heirs of the same grace, partakers of the same glory. 5. *Believed on in the world*: Christ came into the world in so despicable a manner, that he was disregarded by the world, who are allured and taken with outward pomp and outward magnificence: therefore that any should believe on him in the world is a just wonder, and a mystery of godliness; though Christ be liberally preached, yet he is sparingly received, *Isa. liii. 1.* *Who hath believed our report?* Christ is believed on in the world, but, alas! comparatively but by few. Lord, enlarge the number of thy believers, and confirm that number in believing! 6. *Received up into glory*, where he sits in his glorified humanity, united in his glorious deity, with all that blood and gore wiped off with which he was besmeared in the day of his passion, and his body shining brighter than ten thousand suns. This body the heavens must contain till the restitution of all things, when he shall come from heaven, as he went into heaven, attended with glorious angels, summon the whole host of saints to meet him in the air, that so they may ever be with their Lord. O! strengthen our faith in this desirable happiness, and set our souls longing for the full fruition and final enjoyment of it. *Amen.*

CHAP. IV.

The last verse of the foregoing chapter having fully acquainted us with the great and mysterious doctrines of Christianity, namely, That the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, justified in and by the Holy Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and at last received up into glory: our apostle comes in this chapter to acquaint Timothy with (that he may forewarn the church of) an apostasy and revolt from the Christian faith, though not in all parts of it, yet from several main and fundamental parts of it; without assuring them, it was no more than what had been long foretold, for the Spirit spake expressly, that in the latter times some should depart, *2e. v. 1.*

NOW the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to

seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

As if our apostle had said, "Although the mystery of godliness, the doctrine of Christianity, be so clearly revealed, and fully confirmed, yet the spirit of prophecy has very plainly told us, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith once embraced by them, either in whole or in part; turning apostates, by giving heed to impostures and doctrines of men, teaching errors suggested by devils, who cover their lies with hypocritical pretences, and are men of hardened hearts, seared consciences, profligate lives, forbidding some, whom they have seduced, to marry, and commanding them to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving by them which do believe and know the truth." Observe here,

1. That the apostasy and defection of a considerable part of the Christian church in the latter times was foreseen and foretold very long before it came to pass: by Daniel, say some, chap. xi. 27, 38, &c. by St. Paul, say others, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians; and in his first epistle to Timothy, the Spirit speaketh expressly, that some shall depart from the faith, that is, from the doctrine of the faith received; which we know the church of Rome has most notoriously done. Observe, 2. The cause of this apostasy and defection from Christianity, *Giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.* *Quest.* But what is here meant by doctrines of devils? *Ans.* These (says our reverend archbishop Tillotson) can be no other doctrines than those tending to idolatry, which the scripture every where doth in a particular manner ascribe to the devil, as the inventor and promoter of; therefore he tells us, that, in some ancient copies, the words run thus: *In the latter times some shall apostatize from the faith; for they shall worship the dead, having regard to doctrines of devils:*—so that the particular kind of idolatry into which some part of the Christian church should apostatize, is here pointed out, namely, that they should worship souls departed, or the spirits of dead men, which was part of the heathen idolatry, into which the people of Israel did frequently relapse; these departed souls were called *Demons*,

and were esteemed a middle sort of divine powers, between the supreme gods and mortal men, whose office it was to be agents and mediators between the gods above and men below; thus is the holy city trodden down by the Gentiles, that is, overwhelmed with the Gentiles' idolatry. Observe, 3. The persons revolting, who they are foretold to be; not all, but some only: *In the latter days, some shall depart from the faith;* not the whole visible church, but a very great and considerable part of it. Learn thence, That the true church of Christ was never wholly extinguished, nor the light of the gospel ever quite put out, no, not in the greatest darkness, that ever was, to overwhelm it; some (only) and not all, that shall depart from the faith. Observe, 4. The persons described who should be the occasion of this apostasy and revolt: namely, such as *speak lies in hypocrisy*, and have *seared consciences*, that is, such stupid consciences as have lost the sense of good and evil, and no longer do their office. These lies, which the apostate church of Rome is guilty of, the profound Mr. Mede styles, "Lying miracles, fabulous legends of the acts of saints and sufferings of martyrs, counterfeit writings under the name of the first and best antiquity." Lord! who could have coined or believed such monstrous stuff as the popish legends are fraught with, but such as are canterized, past all feeling and tenderness both of conscience and sense itself. Observe, 5. The doctrines discovered which these apostates would teach, namely, the forbidding marriage to some, and enjoining abstinence from some meats as unlawful and unclean to others, both which are called doctrines of devils, that is, wicked and devilish doctrines. Learn thence, That the Popish doctrine forbidding marriage, not absolutely to all, but with restrictions and limitation to some, to wit, their clergy, and all such as shall enter into holy orders, is a devilish and wicked doctrine: for it forbids that which the word alloweth, nay, in some cases commandeth, *Heb. xiii. 4. Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled;* if honourable in all, then surely lawful for all; under the Old Testament, the prophets, priests, and Levites, did marry; under the New, the ministers of God have a power to marry; *1 Cor. ix. 5. Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife?* And that they made use of their power is evident from the following words, *as well as other apostles and Cephas.* The other wicked doctrine concerning meats is also found in the church of Rome, who by a law to oblige some orders of men, as monks, to abstain from certain meats reducing them thereby

from Christian liberty to a conformity to the legal rites, which may well be reckoned as an apostasy from the Christian faith; for although St. Paul, *Rom. xiv.* doth allow the forbearance of some sorts of meats to avoid scandal, yet he doth no where condemn the eating of them as unclean: the doctrine therefore of the church of Rome, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, is wicked and devilish.

4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: 5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Here our apostle assigns a reason why Christians are not forbidden under the gospel to abstain from particular meats, namely, because the distinction of meats (clean and unclean) is taken away, and every creature of God is good in itself, and clean to us, and nothing to be refused, as unlawful or unclean, if it be received thankfully from God's hand: *For it is sanctified by the word*, that is, by the gospel; it is made clean to us, *that having taken off the difference of meats, and to the pure made all things pure.* Note here, 1. The quality of all God's creatures as they come from him, and are given to us, *Every creature of God is good.* Note, 2. The use of God's creatures consisting in their lawfulness unto us, and our liberty unto them, *Nothing is to be refused*; so that there is no sin in the use of them, nor no religion in the forbearing of them, or abstaining from them; this liberty was given us by God, and restored by Christ, therefore we must not suffer our Christian liberty to be impeached by Judaism. Note, 3. A condition necessary on our part, lest the creatures, otherwise good and lawful, should become unto us evil and hurtful, and that is, thankfulness: *If it be received with thanksgiving*, with the thankfulness of the heart expressed by the language of the lips. Note, 4. The way and means by which the creatures become clean and sanctified to us; namely, by the word of God and prayer. 1. By the word of God; here observe, a threefold word of God, by which the creature is sanctified, namely, the word of donation, the word of benediction, and the word of promise. By the first he bestows his creatures upon us, by the second he blesses the creatures to us, and by the third he confirms his blessing in Christ; in whom, and by whom, we have a covenant right unto, and a sanctified use of, all the mercies which we do enjoy. 2. By prayer;

namely, as it obtains from God, first, a right improvement, and secondly, a comfortable enjoyment of all that we do receive; or thus, the creature is sanctified to us by prayer in the procurement of it, in the fruition of it, in the review and recognition of it, and God's mercy in it, with thanksgiving and praise, loving it after God, and for God, and in subordination to God. Thus then *is every creature of God good, and nothing to be refused, being sanctified by the word of God and prayer.*

6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. 7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

Our apostle proceeds from this verse to the end of the chapter, to lay several directions before Timothy with reference to his ministerial office. The first of which is, that he suggest unto, or *put the brethren in remembrance of*, those things which the apostle had taught him, in order to their preservation from the peril and poison of these impostors; thus doing, he would approve himself a good minister of Jesus Christ, and one nourished up with the sincere doctrine of the gospel. Here note, That the ministers of the gospel are in the first place ministers or servants of Jesus Christ; secondarily, and in subserviency, they are ministers of the church; as a nobleman's servant employed by him to distribute wages, or appoint work to the inferior servants, is secondarily a minister to the servants, but primarily a servant to the lord. The second duty that Timothy is exhorted to, is the avoiding and rejecting the doctrines of abstinence from meats and marriage, and to regard them no more than an old woman's tale and to exercise himself unto real godliness. Note here, Something that Timothy must forbear, and something that he must follow after: he must forbear and refuse profane old wives' fables; if thou wilt not swim down the tide of these apostatizing times, take heed of steering thy course by profane, though ancient, customs, refuse them with scorn, and reject them with anger; one way to prevent apostasy, is to refuse ungrounded antiquity; that which Timothy is exhorted to follow after, is real godliness; this is his duty, both as a minister, and as a member of Jesus Christ: real godliness ought to be minded as every man's, especially

every minister's, chief and principal business; religion must be our chief occupation.

8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

By *bodily exercise* he meaneth corporal austerities, abstinence from meats and marriage; all the external exercises of religion; these do profit a little, though but a little, in comparison of the profit of godliness. Where note, That fastings, humiliations, and watchings, with other bodily exercises, which serve to bring down the pride and wantonness of the body, have their proper and necessary use, and are expressive of a just revenge which a sinner takes upon himself for former excesses; they are, when wisely managed, what God accepts, but the least that God expects from us: *Bodily exercise profiteth little*. But observe, The universal usefulness of godliness to all the purposes of life, *Godliness is profitable to all things*. 1. It is profitable to make a man rich, to help him to get and increase an estate; because it makes a man wise and prudent, diligent and industrious, thrifty and frugal. 2. It is profitable to make a man renowned as well as rich; it is the only way to attain a good name and reputation: the godly man is a worthy and excellent man, and he is an useful and serviceable man, and such do seldom miss of a good reputation in the world; those that want goodness themselves, will yet commend it in others. 3. It is profitable for pleasure, as well as for riches and honour; for a life of religion doth increase the relish and sweetness of all our sensible enjoyments, so far is it from abridging us of any earthly delights: and besides, it adds to us a world of pleasures of its own; thus *godliness is profitable unto men in all things*, having the promise of happiness both in this life, and that which is to come, annexed to it.

9 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation. 10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

Note, That this phrase of a *faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation*, used here, was used before, chap. i. 15. That Christ came into the world to save sinners. Learn thence, That this proposition, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,

and this, that such sinners as of ungodly will become godly, and persevere in the practice of godliness, shall be happy in the life that now is, and that which is to come; these two propositions are faithful and remarkable sayings, worthy of the acceptation of all reasonable creatures. Note farther, that the belief of this proposition, that godliness has the promise of this and the next life, will cause all Christians, as it did St. Paul, to labour and suffer reproach, to labour in the work of God, to suffer reproach in the cause of God, and this without weariness and fainting. Note, lastly, The title given to Almighty God, *The Saviour of all men*; that is, the preserver of all men, but especially of all good men, when their temporal preservation conduces most to the advantage of his glory and their good: or if it be understood of eternal salvation, we must take it thus; that he publishes and proclaims, offers and tenders, salvation to all men, although believers only are actually saved, because they only accept the offers and conditions of salvation.

11 These things command and teach. 12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Still our apostle proceeds in farther direction and advice to Timothy, both as to his preaching and his practice, both as to his doctrine and conversation. 1. As to his preaching, he requires it to be done with due authority: *These things command and teach*, that is, these things teach commandingly, and with a necessary authority; the ministers of God speak from God, therefore may command from God. 2. As to his conversation, he exhorts him to exercise such a becoming gravity in his deportment, that, though he was very young, none might despise him or his function because of his youth: where piety and modesty meet in young ministers, it will preserve their youth from contempt; and where levity and vanity are found, it will expose not only youth, but gray hairs also, to contempt and scorn. 3. He directs them to be not only a precedent to all ministers, but a pattern to all believers: *Be thou an example of the believers*, and that, 1. In word, or speech; look that thy discourse be wise and instructive, not idle and impertinent, much less frothy and profane, but let something for edification always drop from thy lips. 2. In conversation, look that thy gravity be beyond thy years, make up in thy deportment what is wanting in thy age.

observe a just equality, neither too amusing nor too prostrate, behave not thyself neither above nor below thyself. 3. *In charity*, show benevolence and exercise beneficence towards all mankind, according to thy ability and opportunity: nothing gives a minister a greater advantage for the success of his labours than charitable distributions; this gives us a throne in the hearts of our people, when wisely managed. 4. *In spirit*, that is, in zeal and warmth of spirit, in fervency and affection, in an active and sprightly zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls, such a zeal as may render thee industrious in feeding, governing, and instructing thy flock. 5. *In faith*, that is, in fidelity to, and constancy in, the true religion, not enduring either to be huffed or wheedled out of the truth; for it is a sacred *depositum*, an holy treasure, which we must transmit to our posterity, as our forefathers did to us with their precious blood. 6. *In purity*, in chastity and cleanliness, abstaining from sensual lusts, from wantonness and worldly-mindedness; choose spiritual delights now, for they are the entertainment which we must live upon to eternal ages. By all this we see how much it is in a minister's own power to procure a due esteem to himself, at least to prevent his own contempt, since an holy and exemplary deportment, faithful and constant labours, never fail to do that in some measure: but if we fail here, what other methods soever we use, we shall find God making good his threatening, 1 Sam. ii. 30. that they which despise him *shall be lightly esteemed*; nor will any titles, dignities, or pre-eminences above others, secure the guilty from the efficacy of this curse, which will cleave to their persons, yea, to their memories, like a girdle to their loins.

13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

St. Paul, being uncertain when he should see this young labourer again, adds farther instructions to those already given him. And here, 1. He requires him to *give attendance to reading*, that is, be diligent in private reading the holy scriptures, to enable him to teach, instruct, and exhort others, what they ought to believe and know, and what they ought to practise and do. Where note, That the illuminations and teachings of the Holy Spirit must not take off any ministers from reading and studying the

holy scriptures, but we must fit ourselves the better thereby to exhort, direct, and instruct others. 2. He stirs up and exhorts Timothy not to neglect, but to excite, to use, and diligently improve, those eminent gifts which were given him by prophecy, that is, according to the foregoing prophecies concerning him, and by laying on of the hands of the presbytery, when he was ordained. Where note, That the ceremony of laying on of hands in ordination, is very ancient and apostolical; not accidental or indifferent, but a very necessary rite in the performance of that service; neglect not the gift which was given thee, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Note, 2. That persons ordained ought, with great care and diligence, to stir up the gifts of God's Holy Spirit conferred upon them; for negligence quenches the Spirit of God in them.

15 Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

He exhorted him to read the scriptures before, now to meditate upon what he read. Where note, That if those who were inspired, and divinely qualified, must yet read, meditate, study hard, and employ their whole time to fit themselves for the ministerial work, what shall we think of the ignorance and impudence of our lay-preachers, who, without any such divine qualification, or without any call or commission, without giving themselves wholly to these things, dare presume to teach the scriptures, when they never understood them; nay, can hardly read them! Meditate on these things, and *give thyself wholly to them*. *Be in them*, says the original, lay out thy whole strength and time in studying God's will, and making known thy people's duty. Three things are here explicitly condemned in persons set apart for the holy function. 1. Sloth and negligence; it is a painful service we are engaged in, and woe unto us if we be slothful in business, if we be sparing of our pains for fear of shortening our days, and hastening our end; verily the lamp of our lives can never burn out better than in lighting others to heaven. 2. Worldly-mindedness, 1 Pet. v. 2. feed the flock, but not for filthy lucre: the spiritual man must not so mind earthly things as to make them his principal aim and scope; for if so, he will act accordingly, and defeat all the ends of his ministry. The apostles had no settled maintenance, but their subsistence to seek: yet were wholly in these things. How much should we be so now, who have our maintenance legally secured! How should we

seek the kingdom of God, and the welfare of our people's souls, seeing all other things are added to us, in measure, though not in excess! 3. Incumbrance by worldly business: he that must give himself wholly to these things, what leisure can he find for magistracy, for managing law-suits, for farming of lands, and for secular concerns: we cannot make a business of two things so widely different from each other. Can we be spiritual persons, and yet mere seculars in our thoughts and care? Well therefore might St. Paul say to Timothy, *But thou, O man of God, flee these things*, 1 Tim. vi. 11. Observe lastly, The reason which the apostle subjoins why he would have Timothy do all this: *That his profiting may appear to all men*; he must read, meditate, pray, and study, that he may improve and profit himself; though he was inspired, yet he must not rely upon the Spirit's assistance without his own endeavours: and his improvement by study must appear not barely to himself, but to others, to his people as well as himself, yea, to all persons; his growth and improvement by study and exercise must be so conspicuous, that all his flock may bear witness to it, and bless God for it. *Meditate on these things, and give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all men.*

16. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

As if the apostle had said, "Have a special regard to the piety of thy life, and to the purity of thy doctrine, and this continually; so shalt thou do what lieth in thee, to save both thine own soul, and the souls of all thy people." 1. *Take heed unto thyself.* Our lives must be such as become ministers of God, and preachers of righteousness; for the eyes of God and the whole world are upon us; the observing eye of God, the censorious and insidious eye of the world, who will charge the miscarriages of a single person upon the whole order, and condemn all for the faults of one: therefore let every one take heed unto himself; the honour of our profession requires it, the conscience of our duty challenges it, a due regard to the glory of God and our own reputation commands it. 2. *Take heed unto thy doctrine*, that it be the pure and uncorrupted word of God, expounded agreeably to the sense of the ancient church, and of our own church in particular, which has with the greatest care followed the ancient pattern: many errors are abroad in the world, which have

adulterated the truths of the gospel; it is therefore prudent and necessary, that the ministers of God keep at a great distance from every opinion which looks like heretical, and not to come within the reach of suspicion: it is not enough for us to be innocent, unless we appear so. Note farther, The order of the words: St. Paul bids Timothy first to take heed of his life, and next to his doctrine; not first to his doctrine, and then to his life: *Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine.* Because the success of our doctrine depends upon the goodness of our lives; it is this must render our doctrine operative and effectual; this is the principal thing; we must do as well as teach: for who will believe him in the pulpit, who contradicts himself in his conversation? therefore *take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine.* Note lastly, The great benefit of this course, and the blessed advantage of it: we shall *save ourselves*, deliver our own selves by our diligence and care; for the faithful nurse shall be paid, though the child die at the breast; and not only ourselves, but our people also; *them that hear us*: that is, "We shall do our utmost, and all that lieth in us, to save the souls that are committed to us, that they may be our crown of rejoicing, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming." God will pronounce us pure and innocent from the blood of all men; and if our people perish, their blood will be upon their own heads; which God avert for his mercy's sake. *Amen.*

CHAP. V.

REBUKE not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; 2 The elder women, as mothers; the younger, as sisters, with all purity.

Our apostle here directs Timothy how to manage rightly that great and important duty of ministerial reproof: if aged persons, elders in office, or elders in age, do transgress, they must be rebuked, not magisterially, but fraternally, with humility and gentleness, according to their years; not with austerity and roughness. *The elder men as fathers, the elder women as mothers*, both with just deference and due respect: the younger also must not be treated with contempt, but with gentleness; *The younger men as brethren, the younger women as sisters*, both without pride and fierceness: and with all purity, shunning all levity and wantonness, and eschewing all that savoureth of immodesty or unchastity in thought, speech, look, or behaviour. Learn hence,

That although the ministers of God must not flatter or favour any persons, to the prejudice either of truth or holiness, yet must they put a difference between persons in their reproof; they must not deal with the aged as they deal with the younger, (when we speak reproof, we must also speak respect to the ancient spiritual fathers,) no more than natural children must behave themselves proudly against the ancient, and basely against the honourable.

3 Honour widows that are widows indeed. 4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. 5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. 6 But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. 7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.

Our apostle proceeds to give Timothy directions concerning widows, particularly those who were to be maintained by the church's charity, and to live upon it. Note, 1. The persons who were to be relieved and supported by the church's charity: *widows indeed*; that is, such widows as were *desolate*, being deprived both of husband and maintenance at once; and having neither children, nor grand-children, nor near relations, in a capacity to relieve them; and they were also such as were resolved to continue in widowhood: these he required should be *honoured*, that is, have respect shown them, maintenance allowed them, employment provided for them, to visit the sick and poor, and give notice of their wants to the church, and to spend their time in the exercise of devotion, trusting in God: *Continue in supplication and prayer night and day*. Note, 2. That such widows as had children and near relations, were to be taken care for, by them, and not by the church; *Let them learn to shew piety at home*, that is, relieve their own relations before they show kindness to strangers, or before the church be burdened with them; where the original word is very emphatical and significative. Let them exercise religion and godliness towards their own house; implying, that to extend our charity to our nearest relations is a duty in the first place, and to perform it with cheerfulness is an act of religion and godliness, and that it is in vain to pretend to religion, if we see a

relation in want, and are able, but unwilling, to relieve them. Note, 3. The character which St. Paul gave of some widows in his time: they *lived in pleasure*; with the censure which he passed upon them, namely, that they were *dead whilst they lived*; she that liveth in pleasure, that is, licentiously, sportingly, wantonly, profusely, to the dishonour of her husband's memory, and her own personal disgrace, she is *dead in sin, dead to Christ* and his holy religion, whilst she lives in the world; and so is not to be looked upon by the church as a vital member of it, much less to be maintained by the church's charity. This is what St. Paul thought needful to give Timothy in charge concerning widows, that so they might be found *blameless*, and without scandal to religion.

8 But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

That is, "If any professing Christianity, and having ability, provides not for his own kindred, but especially *for those of his own house*, as parents or children, he liveth so contrary to the Christian faith, that in effect he denies it, and is *worse than an infidel*, who ordinarily take care of their parents, and make provision for their poor relations." The old heathens had this amongst them as an universal principle of nature, to honour the gods, and provide for their parents; affirming, that no man can do any thing more acceptable to the gods than by heaping favours upon their parents; and that nothing can be a greater evidence of atheism and impiety, than to neglect and despise them. Learn hence, That it is most unnatural to be hardened against those to whom we stand engaged by near relation or natural bonds; the light of nature teaches infidels much better.

9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man. 10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saint's feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

Our apostle had given directions concerning such widows as were to be maintained by the church's charity in the preceding verses; he speaks now of such widows as were to be admitted into the church's service, under the name of *deacon-*

ages, whose office it was to take care of the aged and impotent, to be stayed monitors of the younger women, to attend poor women in labour, and to assist at the baptism of the female sex. St. Paul advises, that none be admitted under threescore years of age, and none that was divorced from one husband, and married another: *Let not a widow be taken into the number, that is, of church widows or deaconesses, under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man only.* Next, St. Paul lays down the general and particular qualifications of such widows as should be elected into the church's service; the general qualification is fruitfulness in good works: *If she have diligently followed every good work.* Where note, It is not her age alone, nor her poverty alone, but her Christian behaviour before all, that gave her a right to the church's service and maintenance. The particular qualifications follow: if she has *brought up children* religiously, *if she hath lodged strangers* or christian travellers hospitably, if she has condescended to the meanest offices, not disdaining to wash the very feet of poor Christians in their journeyings; if according to her ability she has done all the good she possibly could, though much short of what she desired. Note here, That in those hot countries persons travelled on foot, and without shoes, wearing only sandals, and having few or no inns for entertainment, or but little money to defray travelling charges, it was a very great work of pious charity to entertain Christian strangers, to receive and lodge them in their houses, to wash and cool, refresh and cleanse their feet, and to administer to their necessities; such widows as are thus qualified he directs may be taken into the church's service, and partake of her maintenance.

11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; 12 Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. 13 And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house: and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not. 14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 15 For some are already turned aside after Satan. 16 If any man or woman that believeth have

widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

Next he tells him what sort of widows he would have him refuse and reject, and by no means admit into the number of deaconesses, or the church's servants; namely, the younger widows, who were not past child-bearing; and therefore waxing wanton against Christ, would marry; that is, growing weary of the church's service, and despairing of marriage in the church, would revolt from the faith, and marry some infidel out of the church. *Having damnation*; that is, committing a sin worthy of damnation, and bringing themselves into a damnable condition. *Because they renounced their first faith*, which they made profession of when they were baptized, turning apostates to please their infidel husbands, which the apostle calls a *turning after Satan*, ver. 15, to the great scandal of Christianity. Observe next, Our apostle shows that such young widows are usually idle, wandering about from house to house, prying into and tattling about other folks' matters; to avoid all which he advises the young women, and particularly the younger widows, to marry and serve God in a conjugal relation, bearing and bringing up their children, guiding their families, and giving no occasion to the enemies of religion to reproach either it or themselves. From all which we may note, That celibacy, or a single life, is no such state of holiness and perfection as the church of Rome would persuade us: we see here it has its temptations and snares, and those not a few nor small; and that our apostle in some cases, and to some persons, recommends a married life before it. Observe lastly, For a close of his discourse concerning widows, he advises, that if any Christian have any helpless widow of his own family, or amongst his relations, that he relieve and maintain her, if he be able, and not cast her upon the charity of the church, lest there be not a sufficiency to supply the wants of such as are widows indeed, aged and helpless; for any to eat the poor's bread, who are not poor, and to whom it does not belong, is robbery.

17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

Our apostle proceeds next to give Timothy directions concerning elders; not old men in years, but elders in office, such as

were employed in the governing of the church, and over and above that service, laboured even unto weariness in preaching of the word, and expounding the Christian doctrine, requiring that *double honour* be given unto such. Note here, 1. The elders' work and duty declared; *to rule well*: wisely to preside over, and discreetly to govern, the church of Christ; also *to labour in the word and doctrine*; to take pains in preaching the gospel upon all occasions: those that are advanced to the highest eminency in the church will not think themselves above this part of their duty. Note, 2. The honour and respect challenged on their behalf: *double honour* is their due, namely, an honour of reverence, and an honour of maintenance, and a double measure of either; some think it an allusion to the first born, who was the priest of the family, and had a double portion amongst his brethren; the Levites succeeded them, and the ministers of the gospel these; who, when laborious in governing and teaching the church of Christ, deserve more honour and better maintenance than the unkind world is willing to confer upon them; who, instead of double honour, sometimes deny them civil respect. Note, 3. In that the apostle styles the ministers' maintenance, *honour*, it follows that their maintenance is not to be esteemed in the nature of alms, but of a tribute paid by an inferior to a superior; neither is our maintenance mercenary wages, but such as ought to be given as a testimony of honour, as well as in the nature of a reward. As then they are worthy of, let them never fail to receive, *double honour*, who *rule well*, and also *labour in the word and doctrine*.

18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

These words evidently show, that by *honour*, in the former verse, is to be understood maintenance: a place is here cited out of Deut. xxv. where the law of Moses forbade the muzzling of the ox that treadeth out the corn, but allowed him feeding all the time of working, in like manner, the labour of the church's guides gives them a right to the church's maintenance and honour; but such as do not labour have a right to neither.

19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. 20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. 21 I charge thee before God, and the

Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

Here our apostle directs Timothy how to proceed in church censures against open offenders: which plainly shows, that there was a right of judging and censuring offenders in Timothy, by virtue of his office. First then he begins to acquaint him with his duty in censuring an elder, and advises him never to admit an accusation against such, without the attestation of two or three witnesses: because, 1. It is the interest of the church of Christ, that the reputation of its ministers be supported. 2. Because prejudiced persons will be ready to accuse without reason. Conscientious ministers shall never want accusers, if false accusers can but find judges that are willing to believe them: therefore against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Next he advises him, when there is a just and sufficient cause for censuring an elder, to do it publicly. *Them that sin*, that is, such elders as sin, and are convicted of it, and so become scandalous by it, rebuke before all the church, before all the clergy as in a synod, putting them to public shame, that others may fear to sin, seeing thee to punish so publicly and impartially. Lastly, he concludes his advice with a very solemn charge to Timothy, before God and Christ and the glorious angels, to observe these rules of justice in ecclesiastical judicature, without preferring one man before another, doing nothing by a partial respect of persons. Learn hence, That so heinous is the sin of unjust and unrighteous judging, especially in ecclesiastical persons, and of such fatal mischief to the church, that all imaginable care and caution ought to be taken to prevent both the sin and the danger of it. *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ*, that thou observe these things.

22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

A twofold sense and interpretation is given of these words. 1. With reference to ordination, and so they are a caution to the governors of the church to admit none into the sacred function hastily, rashly, without due examination and sufficient trial; to which are added words of great terror, *Neither be partaker of other men's sins*; which ought to make a mighty impression on the minds of those in whom the power of ordination is lodged, since the words do

plainly import, that such as do ordain any rashly, entitle themselves to all the scandal they give, and are partakers of their guilt. Note here, 1. The nature of the office the ministers of Christ are ordained to: to rule and labour in the word and doctrine. Note, 2. An authority in Timothy to admit persons into this office, by laying on of hands. Note, 3. The great care and caution, the heedfulness and circumspection, necessary in admitting persons to this holy function. *Lay hands suddenly on no man.* The welfare of the church, the honour of religion, the salvation of men's souls, depend much, very much upon those who are admitted into holy orders. The second interpretation given of these words is, that Timothy is here directed how to carry himself in censuring and absolving of penitents: as if St. Paul had said, "When thou hast justly censured an offender, be not too hasty in absolving of him, (for this also was done by imposition of hands,) until some trial be made of his reformation, lest by so doing thou becomest guilty of his future faults: but keep thyself pure from all sin, whose office it is to censure and reprove sin in others." In both these senses have these words been understood, *Lay hands suddenly on no man; keep thyself pure.*

23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities.

Note here, 1. There is a lawful use of wine to support nature, not to clog it; to cure infirmities, not to cause them: drink it Timothy might medically, and no doubt for cheerfulness and alacrity, that the body might be more fit and expedite for duty: *Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake.* Note, 2. That our meat and drink should be fitted for the preservation of health, rather than for the gratification of our appetite; the former is Christian duty, the latter is brutish sensuality. Note, 3. That the apostles, who had the gift of healing, could not make use of it when and upon whom they pleased; no, not upon themselves, but must help their own infirmities, in and by the use of ordinary means. Thus Timothy here, drink no longer water alone, but use a little wine with it for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities thence proceeding.

24 Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. 25 Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand: and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

St. Paul had just before exhorted Timothy to keep himself pure from other men's sins, whether candidates or penitents: here comes in subsequent advice, in order thereto: as if our apostle had said, "Timothy, if thou beest diligent to observe, and not over hasty either in ordaining candidates, or absolving penitents, thou mayest in some measure perceive who are worthy, and who are unworthy. If thou layest thine hands upon those who are actually faulty, thou partakest with them, by being an occasion of their sinning; but if thou canst not discover their faultiness beforehand, though they afterwards prove wicked, it is not thy fault; God will at length detect them, yea, they will discover themselves; and when their faults are manifest, deal with them according to the discipline of the church." Learn hence, 1. That how much soever sinners attempt the hiding, yet they cannot actually hide themselves, or their sinnings, from God's sight and knowledge. *They cannot be hid,* says St. Paul, though men labour much to hide them. Oh! sinner, there is no way to hide thyself from God: thou mayest by repentance hide thyself in God, in the love, in the favour, in the mercy of God, but from God thou canst not be hid. As the saints' good works are open and manifest in the sight and to the view of God, so they that are otherwise cannot be hid. Where can a sinner be hid from him who is every where? Or what thing can be our covering from him, in whose sight all things are open? Lord! what will it avail to hide ourselves from men, when we lie open and manifest to the eye of God? *They that are otherwise cannot be hid.*

CHAP. VI.

LET as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. 2 And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort:

Our apostle having, in the preceding chapters, instructed Timothy to give the necessary directions for the performance of several relative duties, in this chapter he particularly directs him to instruct Christian servants to the acceptable performance of that great duty of obedience,

which they owe to their respective masters, whether infidels or Christians. Christianity frees persons from sinful slavery or bondage, but not from civil servitude and subjection. Religion does not level persons, but allows of an inequality amongst men, superiors and inferiors; and as it gives the former a power to command, so it lays the latter under an obligation to obey. Observe, 2. The general duty required of all servants towards their masters, and that is, to give them all the honour and obedience which is due in that relation: let them account their masters worthy of all honour. What masters? 1. Their infidel and unbelieving masters; they are required to carry it dutifully and respectfully towards them. 2. Their *believing* or Christian masters: they should not despise them because they are brethren; for Christian brotherhood consists with inequality of place and relation, and with subjection of one person to another: but they ought to serve such masters the more readily and cheerfully, because brethren beloved of God, and partakers of the benefit, namely, of redemption by Christ, and of the sanctifying grace of God. Observe lastly, The grand argument which St. Paul uses to enforce the duty of obedience upon all servants, *That the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed*; that is, the men of the world will reproach religion, revile Christianity, and say that it teaches, or allows at least, that men be stubborn and disobedient. Where note, That the poorest and meanest professor of Christianity may do much good or much hurt to religion: some might be ready to say "Alas, what credit or discredit can a poor servant do to religion?" Much every way: he may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, Tit. ii. 9. by his Christian behaviour; and the name of God, and his doctrine, may be blasphemed by him, if he be negligent in his duty. None are so inconsiderable but they are capable of serving the great ends of religion, and may honour God in some measure; and are capable of being honoured by him upon earth, and with him in the highest heavens.

—These things teach and exhort. 3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, 4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5 Perverse disputings of men

of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

Observe here, 1. The solemn charge which the Holy Ghost by St. Paul gives to Timothy, to teach and press these relative duties of servants towards their masters, with great zeal and affectionate earnestness, *These things teach and exhort*: as if our apostle had said, "They are duties of great moment, therefore teach and press them earnestly." Doubtless there is much of the pleasure and will of God in these commands, and the honour and glory of God is much concerned in them, otherwise the Spirit of God had never been so earnest in the pressing of them; the power of holiness in nothing discovers itself more conspicuously than in the performance of relative duties: we are no more really than what we are relatively; relative holiness is the brightest ornament of religion. Observe, 2. The high character which St. Paul gives of this doctrine, which urges the practice of these relative duties: he calls what he says and writes about it, *Wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Learn thence, That the words written by St. Paul in this and his other epistles, are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is, words agreeable to his mind and will, written with an eye to his glory, promoting his honour, correspondent with and suitable to his practice when here on earth. Observe, 3. The odious character wherewith he brands those false and flattering teachers, which preached contrary doctrine to what Jesus Christ by his apostles had delivered; he charges them with pride, ignorance, envy, strife, railing, evil surmising, and with supposing that gain was godliness; that is, their end in professing godliness was this, that they might make gain of it, and get preferment by it, making use of religion only as a block to take horse at: but to make use of religion in policy, for worldly advantage sake, is the way to be damned with a vengeance for religion sake. Observe lastly, St. Paul's advice to Timothy to withdraw from these men, *From such withdraw thyself*; hold no communion with them, maintain no disputes with them, for they dote about questions, and strive about words. Note here, from St. Paul bidding Timothy withdraw himself from them, that it is very evident that he speaks of persons who were then in being, the Gnostic heretics, according to some; the judaizing teachers, in the opinion of others; that is, they of the circumcision, who taught things which they ought not, for filthy lucre sake. Whoever

they were, St. Paul's admonition to Timothy, to withdraw himself from such, teaches us that heretical seducers are to be shunned and avoided, rather than disputed with, as unfit for our Christian communion, and common conversation.

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into *this* world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content,

As if the apostle had said, "Although these seducers are for making a gain of godliness, yet we know that godliness is great gain, especially godliness with contentment; with contentment, I say, which it becomes us to have, *for we brought nothing into the world with us, and shall carry nothing away with us; having therefore food and raiment, let us be therewith content and satisfied.*" Learn hence, 1. That godliness is the sincere practice of the Christian religion, so called, because it directeth and prescribeth to us the true and only way of worshipping and serving God. Learn, 2. That some men suit their godliness with their worldly ends, they make a trade and saving bargain of it. Learn, 3. That godliness, or the sincere practice of the Christian religion, is true gain, great gain, yea, the best gain, both for this world, and that which is to come. Learn, 4. That one great point of godliness, is to be content with what we have, yea, though it be only food and raiment. Contentment is a sedate and quiet temper of mind about outward things: it is the wisdom and will of God not to give to all alike, but to some more, to others less, of these outward comforts; but nothing besides food and raiment is absolutely necessary, a little will suffice a contented mind; he is not rich that has much, but he that has enough: that man is poor who covets more, having food and raiment, &c. Observe lastly, The apostle's argument to excite and move the Christian to this duty of contentment, without enlarging his desires inordinately after the world, and the perishing satisfactions of it. *For we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*; where remark, that the note of assurance is fixed rather to our carrying out than to our bringing in; the apostle doth not say, it is certain that we brought nothing into the world, and we shall carry nothing out: but he says, we brought nothing in, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The note of assurance is applied to the latter; for this reason I conceive,

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because though all persons come naked, and bring nothing with them into the world, yet abundance is put upon them, and they are born heirs to vast possessions; but it is obvious to every eye, and most indubitably certain, that they carry nothing away with them. Death is called an unclothing; it unclothes the body, disrobing it of all its gaudy and glorious attire: yea, it unclothes the bones; our flesh wears off quickly in the grave. We proverbially say of a rich man, he has left a vast estate, left it behind him, carrying neither a foot of land, nor a farthing of money with him; therefore doth St. Paul add, *it is certain we can carry nothing out.*

9 But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

Observe here, 1. The parties described: they that will be rich, that is, whether God will or no; their hearts are set upon the world, they feel it coming, and have it they will, if by any means, right or wrong, they can come at it, ask nobody's leave, no, not God Almighty's leave, but rich they are resolved to be. Observe, 2. Their danger represented: they fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish lusts, &c. Learn hence, That a will and resolution to be rich, is the occasion of much mischief to those that cherish and allow it in themselves; a will to be rich, is to make riches our principal business, our main scope, our great work, to pursue the world with the full bent of our wills: now the bent of our wills is discovered, first, by intention, secondly, by industrious prosecution; when the mind is wholly intent upon getting wealth, and unwearied industry is found in the pursuit of it. Now this is to make a god of the world; for that which is a man's aim, design, and end, is his chief good, and that which is our chiefest good is God. *They that will be rich, &c.* Learn, 2. That an hot and over eager pursuit of the world lays a man open to endless temptations, so that it is not only difficult, but impossible, to keep his innocency; and that being irrecoverably lost, drowns a man in perdition and destruction.

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Here we have the nature of covetousness, the evil and sin of covetousness, and

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the mischief and hurt of it declared. Observe, 1. The nature of it: it is an inordinate love of money, an insatiable desire after wealth. Observe, 2. The evil and sinfulness of it: it is a root of sin, *The root of all evil*; the fruit of all sin grows from this root, distrustful care, tormenting fear, anger, malice, envy, deceit, oppression, bribery, perjury, vexatious lawsuits, and the like; nay, farther, covetousness is the root of heresy in judgment, as well as of iniquity in practice. *They have erred from the faith*: that is, in point of doctrine, as well as in practice; it makes a man believe, as well as act, against the rule of faith, for filthy lucre. Observe, 3. The mischief and hurt of covetousness declared: it pierces, it *pierces through with sorrows*, yea, *with many sorrows*. But whom doth it pierce? First, others; it pierces the poor, the needy, the widow, the fatherless, all that fall within the reach of its gripping hand; nay, it doth not spare its own master, or slave rather, but pierces him: *They pierce themselves through*, says the apostle, *with many sorrows*, with many more, and much worse sorrows, than they pierce others with. Riches ill gotten, by covetousness or oppression, instead of making their owners heartily merry, make their consciences ache, and give them many a stitch in their side. None can tell what gall and wormwood springs from this bitter root, both to themselves and others: *The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some covet after, they err from the faith, piercing themselves through with many sorrows*. It is the root of all evil, of sin, and also of trouble and disquiet.

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's compellation, or the title given to Timothy, *Thou, O man of God*: it is a title borrowed from the Old Testament, where it is frequently given to the prophets, who revealed the mind and will of God to the people. Now by giving it to Timothy, the apostle intimates his duty to him, to condemn the world, and flee the eager pursuit of riches. As if the apostle had said, "O Timothy! thou art a minister, and a man of God, solemnly dedicated to his service, and devoted entirely to his glory; see then that thou abhor, and avoid that detestable sin of covetousness. Heavenly truths are the subjects of thy daily study; Oh! let not earthly things be the object of thy chiefest delight and love; but follow after spiritual

riches, namely, *righteousness and godliness, faith and love, patience and meekness*; that godliness which gives contentment with food and raiment, that faith which assures us of a better and more enduring substance, that righteousness or justice which requires us to let every man enjoy his own, that love which makes us willing to distribute, that patience which makes us willing to submit to a low condition, that meekness which suppresses wrath against those that are injurious to us. All these virtues and graces are necessary to thee as a minister of God; they are certainly indications of a mind free from covetousness, and infallible preservations from it."

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

The whole verse is an allusion to the Olympic games, particularly to that of racing, where the garland or crown being hung up at the end of the goal, he that came first did lay hold of it, and take it to himself; and because these games were performed in the sight of many spectators, the apostle continues the allusion, and says, Timothy had before many witnesses professed his readiness to suffer for the faith. The sense of the apostle in this advice seems to be this: "*Fight the good fight of faith*: go on by faith to overcome all temptations and difficulties; press toward the mark, till thou lay hold on the prize, which is eternal life: to which spiritual welfare and Christian race thou gavest in thy name, when being baptised and ordained, thou madest a public profession of the faith before many witnesses."

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, 14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15 Which in his times he shall show, *who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*; 16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be honour and power ever-lasting*. Amen.

Observe here, what a solemn adjuration

and vehement charge is given to Timothy, by our apostle to watch and guard against the sin of covetousness, and avoid the eager pursuit of worldly wealth: *I charge thee before God and Christ, that thou keep this commandment spotless and unrebukable, until the coming of Christ, and mayest be found such at his appearing.* Observe, 2. What a glorious display our apostle here makes of the adorable attributes of God; he styles him the God that *quickeneth* all things, that is all things that have, or shall have life; *the blessed and only Potentate*, because all power is essential in him, and derived from him; who *only hath immortality*, that is, an original, primitive, simple, independent, essential immortality, that is only proper and peculiar to God; he only is essentially and necessarily of himself immortal; *dwelling in the light* which is inaccessible, and none can approach unto; and *whom no man hath seen, nor can see*. God is invisible in his essence; he is not to be seen by any mortal eye on earth, the eye of faith sees him only here; nay he is not to be seen by any glorified eye in heaven, in his divine essence; the nature and essence of God never was seen, nor shall be seen. But we are by the sight of God in heaven, to understand a more clear and full manifestation of God unto us, even so far as our glorified natures can bear it; it will be abundantly beyond expression, yea, beyond our comprehension. Observe, 3. The testimony which the holy apostle bears to our Lord Jesus Christ when here on earth, that *before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good confession*: that is, he did not deny the truth to save his life, but gave all his ministers and people an example of courage and constancy in owning the truth, and sealing it with his blood.

17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Our apostle having in a very solemn manner exhorted Timothy to avoid that dangerous sin of covetousness himself, in the foregoing verses he doth in these verses require him to lay the same charge upon others, particularly upon worldly rich men; *Charge them that are rich.* Observe here,

1. Timothy's duty, not barely to exhort and teach, but to charge and command. True, the ministers of Christ are servants to their people; but servants to their souls, not to their wills, much less to their lusts: there is an authority in our office, which empowers us to command for God, as well as to entreat. Observe, 2. The subject of this Charge: *them that are rich in this world.* Mark, no man is forbidden to be rich, nor yet to use such lawful means by which, through God's blessing thereupon, men may be rich; but rich men need a charge; they want plain dealing from ministers, because they meet with so little of it from other men; for some flatter them, others fear them: God's ministers ought surely to deal fairly with them. Observe, 3. The charge itself; and this is set down negatively, and affirmatively, both, twofold. 1. The negative matter of the charge, *That they be not high-minded*; pride of heart, and haughtiness of mind and spirit, is one special sin which great men are subject to. When God lifts them up by his providence, they lift themselves up by pride: there is a secret malignity in riches when they meet with men's corruptions, to lift them above their due region: though neither the wiser, the holier, the nearer heaven, for all their wealth, nay, perhaps a great deal nearer hell for the abuse of it, yet still the rich think high, look big, breathe scorn, talk with disdain, forgetting that God gives them riches to exalt him, and not themselves. Next part of the negative charge is, *That they trust not in uncertain riches*; intimating that creature-confidence, or making an idol of wealth, is the dreadful bane and ruin of rich men; their actions say to the gold, *Thou art my hope, and to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence*; but the vanity and sinfulness of this appears by the apostle's calling them *uncertain riches*; uncertain in their abode and continuances with us, uncertain in their promises and pretences to us: we expect more from them than ever we find in them. Observe, 4. The positive part of the charge; 1. To trust in God, the living God, a bountiful God; he giveth riches; they buy, they do not give, he giveth *all things*; all the wealth in the world cannot give a mouthful of air or ray of light if God withholds it. God is the giver of all: he giveth richly all things; the most miserable man cannot number the rich mercies which he doth receive; and he giveth *all things richly to enjoy*: that is, he gives an heart to take and taste the comfort of what he gives; he gives not only possessions, but fruition. Riches can do none of these things; why then

should we trust in *uncertain riches* and not in the *living God*? Observe, 5. Another duty exhorted to; and that is, to imitate God in the works of bounty; *to do good*. Rich men are to make their wealth the materials of good works; nay, they must not only do good works, but be *rich in good works*; as their estate is plentiful, so must their charity be proportionable: they must do it copiously, *be rich in good works*; they must do it cheerfully, *ready to distribute*, without grudging, and without delay; they must do it diffusively, *willing to communicate*, that is, to do as much good to the community as possibly they can, upon principles of humanity, and upon principles of Christianity also. Observe, 6. The encouragements given to this duty. 1. Thus to lay out is *to lay up*, and that as in a treasury; it is like scattering of seed, in order to an increase and harvest. 2. Thus to lay out upon others, is to lay up for themselves; they have the comfort here, and the reward hereafter. 3. It is to lay up for themselves *a foundation*; not by way of merit towards God, but by way of evidence in regard of ourselves; a testimony of our reconciliation to, and acceptance with, God. 4. It is a good foundation *for the time to come*: all our glory, wealth, and substance, is no durable foundation; here to-day, and gone to-morrow; but good works are a bank in heaven: all is deposited in a safe hand that we lay out for God. 5. It shall be rewarded with eternal life; *Laying up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life*. Now from the whole learn, 1. That the wisdom of God has seen fit to make a great distinction between men in this world; some are poor, others rich, as God sees best for both. Learn, 2. That some are rich who are not rich in this world; rich in faith, heirs of a kingdom, yet wandering in deserts, dens, and caves. 3. That there are many who are only *rich in this world*; look beyond the grave, and they are poor men, miserable men, having great possessions in this world, but no provisions for the next. Learn, 4. That the great design which all men, especially rich men, should pursue and prosecute in this life, is, how they may in this life secure and lay hold of eternal life: blessed be God, it may be laid hold upon; it is worth laying hold upon; it is life, it is eternal life. *Quest.* But how should we lay hold upon eternal life? *Ans.* 1. In our judgments; by hav-

ing them convinced of the transcendent excellency of it, and by having them approve of the strictest conditions upon which it is tendered. 2. In our affections; by strong and vehement desires after eternal life. 3. In our endeavours; by a diligent use of all means in order to the obtaining of it, and particularly by doing good, by being rich in good works, by being ready to distribute, and willing to communicate: for hereby shall we lay up for ourselves *a good foundation against the time to come*, and at length *lay hold of eternal life*.

20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: 21 Which some professing, have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

Our apostles concludes this his epistle to Timothy with a very passionate and pathetic exhortation to him; that he would maintain the purity of the doctrine of the gospel, and preach that to his hearers, avoiding all idle speculations and philosophical niceties, which the heathen philosophers admire, despising, in the mean time, the plainness and simplicity of the gospel: and he tells him farther, that some Christians, being taken with this sort of learning, have corrupted Christianity, turned heretics, erring concerning the faith; to prevent which, he begs for Timothy the grace of God, to preserve, sanctify, and save him. Learn hence, That in the first beginnings of Christianity, the philosophers, by pretences of great learning, were the greatest despisers and the bitterest enemies of Christianity. Secondly, That the generality of them were taken up with mere useless quibbling, striving about words and barren notions, instead of necessary and useful knowledge. Thirdly, That Timothy, and every minister of Christ with him, ought to preach the gospel without any such human mixtures, in the purity and plainness of it; and the people receive it with a simplicity of mind, to be guided and directed by it. Lastly, That the sanctifying and establishing grace of God is necessary, and indispensably needful, to preserve both ministers and people steadfast in the faith of the gospel, and to persevere in their obedience to it.

THE

SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO

TIMOTHY.

It is generally concluded, that it was not long before St. Paul's death that he wrote this Epistle to Timothy; and some think that it was the last epistle that ever he wrote, in which he foretells the near approach of his own death and martyrdom, chap. iv. 6, saying, "I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand."

The design of our apostle in this Epistle is twofold: to forewarn, and thereby forearm, his dear son Timothy against those heretics, seducers, and false teachers, which were then arising and creeping into the church; and next, to excite him to the utmost care and diligence in the faithful discharge of his office; exhorting him to prepare for sufferings and persecutions, from his own example set before him.

CHAP. I.

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, 2 To Timothy, *my* dearly-beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

In these verses we have the penman of this epistle described; by his name, Paul; by his office, *an apostle*; by the person that sent him, *Jesus Christ*; by the end of his mission, to preach the *promise of life*; that is, the gospel, in which the promise of life eternal is contained. Note here, 1. That it is God's call, and not barely God's permission, his commanding will, and not barely his permitting will, which must warrant a person's undertaking the sacred office, and prove him a true minister of Jesus Christ: *Paul, an apostle by the will of God*. Note, 2. That as Adam brought the sentence of death upon all, and the promise of life is made to us in and through Jesus Christ; so that promise of life must have ministers to proclaim it, and to preach this promise is their proper work. Observe, 2. The person described, to whom this epistle is directed, and that by his name, Timothy; by his relation, *a son*; by his affection, *a beloved son*, a dearly beloved son. Some think St. Paul calls him his son, because

converted by him to Christianity; others because more thoroughly instructed, edified, and encouraged, by our apostle; possibly because he was assistant to him, a co-worker and fellow-labourer with him in the work of the gospel, and for that reason most affectionately beloved by him. From whence learn, With what fervour of sincere affection the ministers of Christ should love one another, speak respectfully of each other, secure the reputation one of another, strengthen each other's hands, and encourage one another's hearts, in the work of God. We have little love from the world: Lord! how sad is it that we should have less one for another! Behold here how St. Paul's and his assistant Timothy's hearts were knit one to another, like father and son; to the great reputation, as well as successful furtherance, of the gospel. Observe, 3. The apostle's salutation, in form of a prayer: *Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord*. Learn hence, That all spiritual blessings flow from God as the Father in Christ unto us; and that no grace, mercy, or peace, can be had from God the Father, but in, by, and through, our Lord Jesus Christ.

3 I thank God, whom I serve from *my* forefathers with pure conscience,—

But how could Paul before conversion be said to serve the God of his forefathers

with a pure conscience, when he was a persecutor, and the chief of sinners! *Ans.* The meaning is, that he worshipped the same God, and the only true God, which his forefathers worshipped, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and that he worshipped him in sincerity, according to his conscience, and the measures of light then received. Learn hence, That the church before Christ had the same faith, the same object of faith, and worshipped God, the same God, under the law, with us under the gospel: *I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers.*

—That without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;

Behold here the ministers' duty, in a more especial manner, to be much in prayer one for another; they stand greatly in need of this mutual help to strengthen each other's hands, and encourage one another's hearts in the ways of God: they should therefore, without ceasing, remember one another at the throne of grace.

4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;

Observe here, the vehemency of affection which our apostle expresses towards Timothy; he desired, greatly desired, to see him, and with the sight of him to be filled with joy. Note, That though we must love all Christians with a sincere love, yet we may love some Christians with a more fervent love than others; choice and useful Christians, endearing and endeared friends, may and must be loved above others: *I desire greatly to see thee, &c.* Observe farther, St. Paul declares how mindful he was of Timothy's tears; perhaps a flood of tears were shed at their last parting one from another. The best of men have a propension to weeping, and upon occasion have shed tears; so had Jacob, Joseph, David, and Christ himself. True goodness promotes compassion; good men ever have been, and are, men of tender and compassionate dispositions.

5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

This is another reason why St. Paul so earnestly desired a sight of his dear son Timothy; namely, a remembrance of his faith, as well as of his tears: which faith is described by the quality of it, *unfeigned*: by the effect of it, it *dwelt*: by the subjects

wherein, in Lois, Eunice, and Timothy: by the order in which, first, in the grandmother Lois, then in the mother Eunice, and lastly in the child Timothy. Learn hence, That it is a most desirable and blessed thing when there is a succession of believers in a family, and to see faith transmitted down to posterity, when grandmother, mother, and grandchild, all walk in the truth. Thus here: and whereas Timothy received the advantage of religious education from those two holy women, Lois, and Eunice, we learn, That God often blesses the labours and examples of holy women, to raise up excellent instruments in his church.

6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

Observe here, 1. St. Paul's care in putting Timothy in remembrance of his duty, though he very well knew it before: *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance.* None are so well instructed in their duty, but they may and ought sometimes to be put in remembrance of what their duty is. Note, 2. The duty which St. Paul puts him in remembrance of; namely, to *stir up the gift of God which was in him, by putting on of the apostle's hands.* Where observe, 1. What the gift was which he advises should be stirred up; namely, the Holy Ghost, in its ministerial gifts and sanctifying graces; particularly a divine power, which disposed and enabled him to teach and live, to act and do, answerably to the duties incumbent upon him as a minister of Jesus Christ. Observe, 2. What care Timothy must take of this gift; namely, to stir it up. The word is a metaphor taken from fire, which, if not stirred up, grows dead, and gives little heat. They that have received much grace and many gifts from the Holy Spirit, may yet be wanting to themselves in stirring them up. This stirring up the gift of God in Timothy, respects either the means that are to be used in order to the duty, such are, prayer, reading, meditation; or the duty itself, which consists in feeding the flock of God, in reforming abuses in the church of God, and in enduring hardships as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Observe, 3. How this gift was bestowed upon Timothy: namely, by putting on of the apostle's hands, together with the hands of the presbytery, 1 Tim. iv. 14. The authority and power was given by the apostle, the presbytery concurring as his assistants. St. Paul did not lay on hands without the presbytery, much less did the presbytery lay on hands without the apos-

die, but he and they in conjunction. From the whole learn, That no persons, especially ministers, ought to suffer the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit to remain in them unexcited and unstirred up: *Stir up the gift of God that is in thee.*

7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. 8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God:

Here our apostle exhorts Timothy to an holy courage and undaunted resolution in the execution of his office. As if he had said, "Be not discouraged by persecution: for God hath not given us, his messengers, the spirit of fear, but of courage and fortitude; fearless we are of the frowns of men: also the *spirit of love*, love to God and the souls of men, which will make the ministers of God indefatigable in their endeavours for the good of souls: likewise the spirit of a sound mind, which enables God's ministers to curb their passions, inordinate lusts, desires, and perturbations of the mind; an admirable spirit, to know when to be angry and severe, and when to be mild and gentle." Learn hence, That love is the genuine principle of obedience, and ought to be that frame of Spirit, that inward affection of mind, from whence all our services to God and our neighbour do proceed. Thus having fortified Timothy against fear, in the seventh verse; he next fortifies him against shame, in the eighth verse: "*Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord*; that is, of giving testimony to the gospel of our Lord, whether by preaching of it, or suffering for it: nor be ashamed of me his prisoner, for I do not suffer as a malefactor: nay, be thou a cheerful partaker of the same sufferings as myself, and for the same cause as myself: *according to the power of God*, that is, being strengthened with the almighty power of God." Learn hence, That the ministers of the gospel are to take care that they are always ready to suffer reproach for the gospel, but that they never be a reproach unto the gospel. Suffering for Christ will be sweet, if it be not imbibed by sinning against Christ.

9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the

world began; 10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: 11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

As if the apostle had said, "To fortify thee against the fear of those persecutions, and to arm thee against the shame of those reproaches, which may probably attend thee in the work of the gospel, consider, that the God whom thou servest in this employment is he that hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling: called us first to Christianity, and then to his holy function of the ministry; but to neither of them according to the merit of our works, as if we had done any thing to deserve either of these favours at his hands; but according to his own purpose and grace given us in Christ before the world began; that is, which from all eternity he decreed and determined to accomplish by Jesus Christ: which gracious purpose of his is now clearly discovered by our Saviour Jesus Christ's coming into the world; *who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light*; that is, made a fuller and clearer discovery of it, by the gospel; to preach which gospel I am a commissioned apostle, and for this I suffer; and God help you, when thereunto called, to suffer with me." Learn hence, 1. That God himself is the author of man's salvation, he hath saved us; that effectual vocation doth accompany salvation; that the Christian's calling is an holy calling; that it is also an act of free and gracious favour in God to call. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace.* Learn, farther, That God's purpose or eternal decree to save before all time, was manifested by Christ's appearing in time: *But now is made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Observe also, The happy effects of Christ's appearing: 1. To abolish death; not to root it at present out of the world, but to take away its dominion, its dread and terror, the whole power and disposal of it, Rev. i. 18. *I am alive, and have the keys of life and death.* 2. To bring life and immortality to light; that is, immortal life more clearly manifested and discovered. Note here, 1. That the soul of man is immortal, and that there is another state, an immortal state, which remains for men after this life; otherwise, the justice of God's providence could not

be sufficiently vindicated; but upon supposal of a future state of immortality it may. An account of the unequal providences of God in this world, is easy to him that believes the certainty of another; as good and evil are at present different in their natures, so shall they be in their rewards. Note, 2. That the greatest discovery that ever was made of life and immortality to lost sinners, is made by Jesus Christ in the gospel. It was discovered, though darkly, to the Old Testament saints; but the discovery made of it by the gospel, as it was an unexpected discovery, a free and gracious discovery, so was a more clear, more full, and final discovery of it: *Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, &c.*

12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that, which I have committed unto him against that day.

For which cause, that is, "For the sake of the gospel, and not as an evil-doer, I suffer patiently all afflictive evils, without either fear or shame, well knowing in whom I repose my faith and hope, my trust and confidence; and firmly believing that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, my temporary life, yea, my eternal life, the life of my soul, my reward in heaven; I have committed all unto him, and deposited all in God's hand, and I am sure he is both able and willing, he both can and will keep in safety that which I have thus committed to him." Note here, 1. That the knowledge of God must precede or go before faith in God. *I know in whom I have believed.* Faith sees not him in whom it believeth, but it knows him in whom it believeth. Note, 2. There is no such way to secure the soul, as to commit it into God's hand; the way to make the soul safe, is to commit it to him to keep, and that in the way of well-doing.

13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 14 That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

By *sound words*, we are to understand the doctrine of the gospel: by *a form of sound words*, the truths and doctrines of the gospel methodically disposed and digested; to

hold it fast, is, not to swerve from it in the course of our ministry, but pertinaciously to adhere to it, not parting with it ourselves, nor suffering it to be adulterated and corrupted by others. This form of sound words some take to be the articles of our creed, in the words wherein we now have them, probably the same in sense, if not in words. This is called, ver. 14, *That good thing* which was committed to Timothy to keep; meaning, that summary of Christian doctrine which was committed to his care and keeping. Learn hence, 1. That evangelical words are sound words: all gospel truth is of an healing nature. Learn, 2. That a form of sound words, or a methodical system of gospel truths, is very profitable both for ministers and people. Learn, 3. That such a form of sound words is very faithfully to be retained, and very carefully to be kept unto. Learn, 4. That faith and love are the hands whereby we are to hold fast gospel-truth: *Hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love which is in Jesus Christ.* Learn, 5. That as Christians are to hold these evangelical truths fast in their judgments, so are they to hold them forth in their love and practices: *Keep by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us*; that is, the power and assistance of the Holy Ghost will not be wanting to our endeavours, to keep our memory, love, and practice, if we be not wanting to ourselves.

15 'Thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia he turned away from me: of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

By *all in Asia*, we are to understand very many, almost all, not every individual person; some think they were teachers in Asia, others that they were private Christians; some that they were his companions and followers, who, when they saw him imprisoned, deserted and left him; and particularly Phygellus, and Hermogenes. Yet note here, 1. That he doth not tax them with apostasy from Christ, when he accuses them of forsaking him: it is too harsh to say, that those that forsake a particular ruler of the church, do forsake Christ himself. Note, 2. In that he says, *All that are in Asia are turned away from me*, that sin may, and oft-times has, the major vote on its side; the generality go one way, and usually the wrong way: sinners, like sheep, run after one another; like fish, swim down the stream together.

16 'The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of

my chain: 17 But when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. 18 The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day; and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

Our apostle having complained of many in Asia forsaking him, in the day of his sufferings, in the foregoing verse; in this he makes a grateful commemoration of the kindness of Onesiphorus towards him, who refreshed him with his presence and relief, and was not ashamed of his chain, of his imprisonment, as others were. Learn, 1. It is no new thing for the most holy and innocent servants of Christ to suffer hardship, imprisonment, banishment, yea, even death itself, for the sake of Christ; and when they do so, to have friends forsake and turn their backs upon them. Prosperity affords many friends, more flatterers; but who regards the prisoner in bonds? who cares for looking upon the dial when the sun is off? Learn, 2. That not to be ashamed of the saints in the day of their sufferings, but to own them and administer to them in such a condition, is a certain sign of a sound and sincere Christian. Good Onesiphorus had this, amongst other evidences of his gracious state, that he was not ashamed to own a persecuted Paul in chains; nay, he searched for the apostle very diligently, and found him; so far was he from hiding his eyes from him, and forsaking him, as the men of Asia did. Observe next, Our apostle's fervent and affectionate prayer to God, abundantly to recompense this labour labour of love in Onesiphorus towards him: first he begs mercy for his whole household, *The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus*. Note, 1. How thankful the saints of God are for mercies received, from God, by the hands of men. Note, 2. That acts of Christian charity to the suffering servants of Christ, do receive a considerable part of their reward, even here, in the hearty and affectionate prayers of the people of God on their behalf. How well did it fare with Onesiphorus and his household, upon the score of St. Paul's prayer, *The Lord show mercy to the house of Onesiphorus*; next he prays for Onesiphorus himself, *The Lord grant that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day*, that is, in the great day of judgment. Learn hence, 1. That the holiest of men, and best of saints, will stand in need of mercy, much mercy, when they stand before God at the great day. Learn, 2. That the merciful Chris-

tian which has here shown mercy to the ministers and members of Jesus Christ, may expect, and shall find, mercy in that day, when they stand in need of mercy. They that show mercy in the evil day, shall certainly find mercy in the great day. *The Lord grant that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.*

CHAP. II.

Our apostle, in this chapter, first exhorts Timothy to the practice of several duties belonging to his sacred function, and that by sundry arguments, drawn from wrestlers, soldiers, and husbandmen, whose laborious industry and indefatigable services he exhorts him to imitate and follow; next he rebukes him from several sins which render the office of a bishop obnoxious to censure, and his person to contempt. Thus he bespeaks him.

THOU therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

St. Paul having acquainted Timothy with the hard things which he had suffered for the gospel of Christ, and withal informed him how many had flinched for fear of suffering, forsaking him and the cause of God defended by him; in this verse he exhorts Timothy to courage and holy resolution for Christ: *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*: that is, when others show pusillanimity and cowardice, do thou show thyself a strong and valiant man, not being affrighted at the dangers that threaten thee in publishing and defending the gospel of Christ. Be strong in the grace of Christ; that is, in the gospel of Christ, which contains a discovery of the riches of his grace; or be strong through the influences of the grace of Christ. Note, first, That as all Christians in general, so the ministers of Christ in particular, do need courage, *Thou, my son, be strong*; nothing he does, but is an act of valour, all duties are attended with difficulties, which put the Christian upon disputing every inch of his way; there are only a few gallant spirits that dare take heaven by storm; and the ministers of Christ do meet with more difficulties than other men. Learn, 2. That our strength both as Christians and as ministers, lies in Christ, and not in ourselves: *Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*; the strength of every saint, yea, of the whole host of saints, lies in the Lord of hosts.

2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

A second charge given to Timothy, is to

take special care that the doctrine of the gospel, and the precepts of holy living, which he had heard St. Paul deliver, in the presence of many witnesses, should be handed down and transmitted to men of great fidelity and ability, whom he was to ordain and empower to teach it unto others. Where note, 1. A direction given to the guides and governors of the church, how they ought to manage themselves in the ordination of the ministerial office: this office is to be committed unto *faithful, able men*; many be useful in the church that cannot be excellent, but he that is unfaithful, is only fit to make atheists. Note, 2. That such as have the gospel deposited with them, may and ought to deposit it with others, and they with others, to the end of the world, thereby to prevent all innovations and diversity of opinions in matters of religion: *What thou hast heard, commit to faithful men.*

3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. 5 And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. 6 The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. 7 Consider what I say: and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

Still we find our apostle prosecuting the great and general design of this epistle, which is to direct Timothy in the faithful discharge of his office, as a minister of the gospel, and particularly to prepare for sufferings, and to inure himself to hardship, and to encounter with difficulties and dangers; hence he compares him to a soldier, to a wrestler and an husbandman: 1. To a soldier: *Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* Learn hence, that every faithful minister is a spiritual soldier, warring under Jesus Christ, his captain and chief commander. Must the soldier be called and do all by commission? so must the minister. Must the soldier be armed, trained up, and disciplined, and made fit for service? so must the minister. Must the soldier shun no dangers, stick at no difficulties, pass through thick and thin? must he use allowed weapons, approved armour of his general's directing, not of his own inventing? all this must the minister be and do. In a word, must the soldier please him who hath chosen him

to be a soldier, and in order therunto, *not entangle himself with the affairs of this life?* such a life of freedom from incumbrance by secular affairs, should the minister of God desire and endeavour after. Soldiers must be as free as may be from distractions; a soldier that fights in fetters, fights thereafter; he must put off his fetters before he puts on his armour. The minister's work lies in the affairs of the other life; now he that is entangled in the affairs of this life, will do little about the affairs of the next. He must also please his Captain, not please himself, his appetite, his pride, his covetousness; much less must he please the enemy he is to fight against, the devil, the world, and the flesh. Again, 2. The minister here is compared to a wrestler: *If a man strive for the mastery:* that is, for the prize, the garland, the crown, at the end of the race; he shall be crowned if he strives lawfully, if he runs fairly according to the rules of the game, and perseveres finally until he comes to the end of the goal. Thus must the ministers of the gospel strive for the crown of life, by putting forth all their strength, exerting their utmost endeavours; such as are now wrestlers, shall ere long be conquerors. Lastly, Timothy, and all with him in the work of the gospel, are here compared to husbandmen; as the husbandman must first toil and labour before he can partake of the fruits of the earth, he must plow and sow before he can reap and gather: so must the minister of God, by a laborious diligence, cultivate and improve the people, before he can hope to reap that great fruit and benefit, by gaining and converting of souls to Christ. God will reward no ministers but the laborious, he will never dignify drones in the church triumphant. Farther, by comparing Timothy to an husbandman, he intimates to him his duty, not to be discouraged if he doth not reap fruit presently; the seed sometimes lies under the clods long before it does appear: we must not despair of men too soon. And lastly, by comparing Timothy to an husbandman, he seems to intimate, that he was to be sustained and maintained by those for whom he laboured. Thus having laid Timothy's duty before him, under the metaphor of a soldier, a wrestler, and an husbandman; he counsels him to consider what he had said unto him, and desires of God to give him a right understanding and sound judgment in all things; intimating that they that will have God's word and good counsel blessed by God to their understanding and practice, must ponder upon it, consider of it, and duly apply it to themselves:

Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

8 Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel: 9 Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil-doer, *even unto bonds*: but the word of God is not bound.

Our apostle having in the foregoing verses, exhorted Timothy to patience and constancy under suffering, comes now to direct him as to the matter and subject of his preaching, particularly that he insist upon the incarnation and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that *Jesus Christ* was the promised Messiah of the seed of David, not of Joseph. Timothy is here called upon to assert the incarnation of Christ, there being some heretics which did very early deny the truth of his human nature, as the *Marcionites* and *Manichees*; as there were others that denied the reality of his divine nature, particularly *Ebion* and *Cerinthus*. Secondly, he calls upon Timothy to preach and press the doctrine of Christ's resurrection also, both because upon that depended the great evidence of his divinity, that he was really God; his resurrection by his own power declared him to be God, *Rom. i. 4.* and also because upon that depends the consolation and salvation of all believers. Remember and frequently inculcate, That Christ was raised from the dead, *according to my gospel*; that is, according to the gospel of Christ preached by me. Christ's incarnation and resurrection are truths much to be preached and inculcated by ministers, and frequently remembered and thoroughly considered by their people. It follows, *Wherein I suffer trouble as an evil-doer, even unto bonds*; but the word of God is not bound: that is, for which gospel, and for preaching which resurrection, I suffer as a criminal and reputed malefactor, yea, I suffer to that degree, that I am bound with chains for preaching Jesus and the resurrection. But the word of God is not bound; though they have restrained me, they cannot restrain that; that is loose and at liberty; when the dispensers of it are in bonds, that has its free course. Learn, That the preachers of the gospel have, from the beginning, met with persecutions, they have suffered trouble as evil doers even unto bonds. Learn, 2. That the persecution of preachers doth not hinder the progress and liberty of the word: when masters are in prison, the word may have free passage, and holy men rejoice at its liberty under their own confinement; yea, the providence of God

so ordered it, (see *Acts*, the last,) that St. Paul, even during his imprisonment, preached the word with all boldness; his confinement had caused the gospel to spread in Rome. Thus God outshoots Satan in his own bow: he thinks when he has the ministers of God in prison, he has done his work, but God overrules and causes their imprisonment itself to fall out rather to the furtherance of the gospel: *I suffer bonds*, says the apostle, but the word of God is not bound.

10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. 11 *It is a faithful saying*: For if we be dead with *him*, we shall also live with *him*: 12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us: 13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.

St. Paul having acquainted Timothy in the foregoing verses with his sufferings, even unto bonds, here he lets him understand and know, why and for whose sake he did so cheerfully endure all these things, namely, *for the elect's sake*. Though the rest of the world rejected the gospel, yet the elect would be confirmed by his example, and obtain that salvation which in and through Jesus Christ was offered and tendered to them. Here note, That there is a certain election of God, which hath infallibly chosen to salvation all those who make their calling and election sure, by perseverance in holiness and good works. Note, 2. That the faithful ministers of Christ do think no sufferings too much or too dear for the sake of God's elect, (for the sake of believing Christians, who are a chosen generation,) so that their sufferings may but further their eternal glory, happiness, and salvation. To encourage yet again to a patient enduring of all sorts of afflictions, he assures Timothy, that if we be rendered conformable to Christ in his sufferings, we shall be also in his glory: *If we suffer for him, we shall reign with him*; if we be dead with *him*, dead to sin, and dead to the world, we shall live also with *him*, in conformity to his resurrection; but if for fear of suffering we disown him, he will also deny us; if we believe not, if we be unfaithful and forsake him, yet he will be true to his word, he will not forsake his own cause, but make good his threatenings; his own veracity stands firm, and is

as much engaged to execute the threatenings as to fulfil the promises.

14 Of these things put *them* in remembrance, charging *them* before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, *but* to the subverting of the hearers. 15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Observe here, 1. The excellent advice which St. Paul gives to Timothy, to all the ministers of the church, and to all the Christian churches far and near, that they spend not their time in disputes, that they contend not about words, which have no tendency to make men either wiser or better, but serve only to violate the laws of charity, and cause men to wrangle eternally, and persecute one another with hard names and characters of reproach. Here note, 1. What those things are which ought not to be matters of contention among Christians; namely, 1. Such things in which we differ from each other rather in words than in sense: oftentimes opponents mean the same things, but differ only in the way and manner of expression. 2. Such things as tend to little or no profit, either as to edification in faith, in love, or in practical godliness. Observe also the apostle's argument, why we should not contend about these things: because they tend to beget strife and contention among Christians, by dividing them into factions and parties, and also tend to the subversion of the hearers, causing them to doubt of the truth of the faith, about which the contending parties cannot agree: *Charge them therefore that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.* Observe next, The solemn charge given to Timothy, as to the matter, manner, and method, of his preaching: that the matter of it be the word of truth, the pure word of God: that it be divided rightly, to every one his portion, to every hearer his due, methodizing and distributing truth, as God would have it, terror to whom terror is due, comfort to whom comfort belongs. The original word rendered *rightly to divide*, some think a sacrificial word, alluding to the right dividing of the sacrifice which was laid upon the altar, separating the precious from the vile, and severing the parts which were not to be offered from them that were, and cutting out the sacrifice in such a manner as all had their share in them. As if St. Paul had said, "Study not for the applause of men, but for the approbation of God, as becometh a

good workman, who needeth not to be ashamed of his work, whosoever looks upon it; but let thy preaching and living be straight and conformable to the gospel, and thus study to show thyself approved of God." Hence learn, That although curious and unprofitable trifling with words in a pulpit be vain and sinful, yet it is a part of a skilful teacher, to order, methodize, and distribute truth in its proper place, and give every hearer his part and portion.

16 But shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness. 17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus; 18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying, that the resurrection is passed already; and overthrow the faith of some.

St. Paul having now finished the exhortatory part of this chapter, and acquainted Timothy what he would have him practise and do, now comes to the dehortation, advising him what he would have him avoid and shun; and here first he bids him *shun profane and vain babblings*; the vain babblings of the heathen philosophers, and the profane notions of heretical and seducing teachers, particularly the *Gnostics*, the following of *Simon Magus* and *Meander*, who were guilty of an apostasy from Christianity, by turning the resurrection into an allegory; affirming, that the resurrection of the soul to piety and virtue, was the only resurrection to be expected, disowning the resurrection of the body, and asserting that the flesh was unfit to rise. Observe secondly, the nature of erroneous doctrine declared; it is of a devouring, spreading, and destroying nature. *Their words will eat as doth a gangrene.* *Quest.* How doth a gangrene eat? *Ans.* It eats speedily, it eats incurably, it eats mortally, as it is well known the gangrene doth. *Quest.* But what is it that heresies eat? *Ans.* Faith, peace, and godliness; so here, *they overthrow the faith of some, and increase unto more ungodliness.* *Quest.* How comes it to pass that they so eat? *Ans.* The spreading and prevailing of heresies may be ascribed partly to the subtilty and activity of seducers, partly to the curiosity and simplicity of the seduced, and partly to the justice of God, for the manifestation of those that are sincere, and the punishment of those that receive not the truth in the love of it.

19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal,

The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

As if our apostle had said, "Notwithstanding that *Hymeneus and Philetus*, with others, are fallen away, nevertheless we know that the foundation of God, his holy covenant, standeth firm and sure, having a seal annexed to it, (as usually contracts have, whereby two parties do oblige themselves mutually to each other,) which seal on God's part has this impress or inscription, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*; and on our part it is written, *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity*." Learn hence, 1. That the covenant of God made with us in Christ Jesus is a firm and sure foundation to build our hopes of perseverance and eternal life upon: *The foundation of God standeth sure*. Learn, 2. That the covenant (according to the nature of all covenants) is conditional; on God's promising assistance, acceptance, and rewards; on our part a departing from all iniquity, and an obligation to the love and practice of universal holiness. All that make a profession of Christianity ought to take especial care that their lives may answer their light, their practices correspond with their profession; Christianity being not a speculative science, but a practical art of holy living.

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. 21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

Our apostle had told us at verses 17 and 18, of certain heretics, such as *Hymeneus and Philetus*, whose doctrines did eat like a canker or gangrene: he tells us here, that it is not to be wondered at, that there should be such persons in the church, because the visible church is God's great house, now it is no uncommon thing in great men's houses, to have vessels of all sorts, some of wood and earth, others of gold and silver, some to honourable uses, and others to dishonourable. In like manner it is in the church of Christ, there will be number of orthodox and also of heterodox Christians, hypocrites and sincere Christians. He also advises Timothy, therefore, not to be scandalized at them, but to purify himself from them, to keep

himself pure from heresy and impiety; hereby he would manifest himself to be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use; that is, for the service and glory of God, and disposed for every good work. Learn hence, That all Christians, but especially the ministers of Christ, ought to be, like the consecrated vessels of the temple, dedicated and set apart for our Lord's especial use and service: we are not only with other Christians dedicated by baptism, but consecrated at our solemn ordination; so that there is a sacredness upon our persons: and to prostitute ourselves to any lust, is a greater profanation than *Belshazzar* was guilty of, when he desecrated the holy vessels of the temple.

22 Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

Still our apostle proceeds in his holy, cautionary directions to Timothy what to avoid, and what to follow. He advises him, 1. To avoid and flee youthful lusts: by which may be understood, not only the lusts of the flesh, but also the lusts and vices of the mind, as ambition and pride, vain-glory and ostentation. Where note, That the flesh, with its affections and lusts, are such dangerous enemies to our holiness and salvation, that the holiest of ministers and best of men have need, very great need, to be warned of them, and cautioned against them: flee thou, O Timothy, also youthful lusts. 2. He advises Timothy also to avoid foolish and unlearned questions, that is, controversies and disputes, knowing that such contentious wranglings do but engender strife. It is not unworthy our observation, that no less than four times in these two epistles, do we meet with this precept from the apostle, to avoid questions and disputes, and to apply to that which is practical, showing of what great importance it is so to do; and we shall meet with it again in the epistle to Titus, chap. iii. 9. From whence learn, That disputes about matters which only serve to beget strife and contention, but tend little to edification in faith and holiness, are vain talking, unprofitable disputes, and as such to be avoided. Observe next, he directs Timothy what to follow, having shown him what to avoid; namely, to follow after righteousness and faith, peace and charity with all persons, but especially with all our brethren and fellow-Christians.

calling on the same Lord, and professing the same faith with us. Where note, That we ought to have charity for, to maintain peace with, and by no means to separate from our communion, any person who serves Christ with a pure heart: *Follow*, says our apostle, *charity and peace, with all those that call on the Lord Jesus Christ out of a pure heart.*

25 And the servant of the Lord must not strive: but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves: if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

By the servant of the Lord, we are here to understand all the bishops and governors, the pastors and teachers, of the church; by not striving, that they are not to irritate and provoke such as dissent and differ from them; not to strive indecently with the tongue, but by soft and gentle words, by close and hard arguments, endeavour to convince their judgment; for no man that is in an error thinks that he is so; therefore if we go about by violence to rend men's opinions from them, they will but hold them so much the faster; but if we have but so much patience and charity as to unpick their errors by degrees, they will at last fall into pieces of themselves. *The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all, and patient;* it follows farther, *in meekness instructing,—if God, peradventure, &c.* Where note, 1. The duty directed to; and that is, without bitterness and passion, but with great lenity and meekness, to instruct the erroneous, even when they oppose the truth; such especially as do it out of ignorance, and for want of better information, are particularly to be pitied, and patiently borne with, together with those who labour under the prejudices and prepossessions of a contrary education; *in meekness instructing those that oppose.* Note, 2. The benefit hoped for, and the advantage expected, by such meek and gentle methods of instruction as are here directed to; 1. That Almighty God may peradventure give them repentance, blessing such prudential and pious means for their conversion from error and seduction; and 2. That they may be recovered out of Satan's snares and temptations, they being at present captivated by him according to his will. Learn, 1. That if erroneous and

mised persons will not bear gentle teaching, much less will they yield to sharp inectives, or provoking disputes. Yet, 2. Disputations wisely managed, like defensive wars, are both useful and necessary in defence of the truth, though they do not bring over gainsayers. Learn, 3. That until erroneous and misled persons can be brought by consideration to be agents in recovering themselves, no teaching or disputing will be sufficient or effectual to recover them: *That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him.* Lastly, error is the devil's snare as well as sin: error is as dangerous as vice; the one is an open road, the other is a by-path, to hell and destruction; consequently, such a Christian as has a due regard to, and value for his own salvation, will be as much afraid of erroneous principles as of debauched practices: *That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

CHAP. III.

Our apostle having, in the two foregoing chapters, forewarned Timothy of these dangerous heretics and false teachers, which were then arising and creeping into the church, he comes now, by a prophetic instinct, to foretell of greater evils and mischiefs, which should certainly arise towards the end of the world, which he calls the last days, and perilous times. The prophetic prediction runs thus:

THIS know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

As if our apostle had said, "O my son Timothy, be not thou discouraged, neither let any of thy successors be dismayed, at the sects and schisms, at the heresies and blasphemies, at the vice and impiety, which will be found in and among persons in the last days, when certainly know, that *perilous times shall come*;" where, by the last days, understand all the times from Christ's first coming in the flesh, to his second coming to judgment; in the beginning of times several sorts of persons, yea, several sects and parties of men, arose, to whom the following characters did belong; namely, proud, covetous, boasters, and the like. As the judaizing teachers, who urged the necessity of circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law; also the Gnostics, and followers of Simon Magus, have these characters applied to them in those early days; and it were well if the church of Rome, in these latter days, could clear herself of these characters, which are found upon her, as the marks and badges of an apostate church. Learn hence, 1. That the days we now live in are the last days, and our times the last times. 2. That

the last times are, and will be, the worst times, *perilous times*, full of sin and full of trouble. Old age is the dregs of life, the world draws upon its lees, the dregs are apparent: *In the last days perilous times shall come.*

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, inconsistent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God ;

Here our apostle reckons up the several sins which would abound in these last days, and make the times perilous: persons professing Christianity shall appear inordinate self-lovers, insatiably covetous, vain-glorious, boasters, proud, despisers of others, blasphemers of God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, by denying the pre-science and foreknowledge of the former, the divinity and godhead of the latter. Learn hence, That sins, especially great sins, seldom go single and alone, but commonly generate and beget one another. Thus here, self-love begets covetousness, covetousness pride, and pride blasphemy. Thus men fall from one sin to another, and proceed from one degree of wickedness to another.

5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

This is the last, but not the least sin of the perilous times: the apostle, 1. Tells us what these men have, *a form of godliness*: that is, a vain, empty show of piety and religion, which discovers itself in external devotion, in a profession of the Christian faith, in an external show of mortification, in a great zeal for some particular party, or private opinion. 2. What they want, the power of godliness, that is, the truth and sincerity of it, consisting in true love to God and our neighbour. 3. The apostle directs us as to our behaviour towards such men, *From these turn away.* Learn hence, 1. That a person may go far, and advance high, in an external profession of piety and religion, and yet have no more than a form of godliness. 2. That notwithstanding this, there is such a thing as the internal and inward power of godliness and religion, which few maintain, but most deny. Learn, 3. That Christians must shun familiarity with such as have the

brand of the foregoing infamous sins upon them, and not hold correspondency with such as are the avowed enemies of Christ and his kingdom.

6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, 7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

In these words our apostle renders a reason why we should turn away from the forementioned sins and sinners, namely, because these heretical and false teachers before characterized are of an insinuating temper; they vent not their errors openly, but in corners; they creep into houses, and there set upon women with their temptations, who have less ability to detect them: and first upon women, that they may better win their husbands over to compliance with them; and upon silly women, and such as were laden with sin, and led away with divers lusts; they make a prey of such women as are weak in their intellects, and corrupt and wicked in their morals; which women always pretend to be learned, *but are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*, and consequently are an easy prey to seducers, and very capable receptive objects for such deceivers to draw away. Learn hence, That seducers observe a method in seducing: they begin with women, weak women, and usually wicked and loose women. Carefully ought that sex to resolve, and shun conversing and disputing with them.

8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate, concerning the faith.

Jannes and Jambres were two famous magicians in Egypt, who withstood Moses when he was working miracles before Pharaoh, to hinder him from believing; their names are not mentioned in scripture, but taken by St. Paul either from public tradition, or some ancient Jewish records. Now, says the apostle, as the magicians resisted Moses, so these heretical seducers resist the truth, making a violent and rancorous opposition against it. Thence learn, That there have been false teachers in all ages, who have with vehemency opposed the truth, and the professors of it. Neither the members nor ministers of Christ shall ever want enemies to war with, whilst the seed of the serpent remains in the world. Observe, 2. The character of those men who resist the truth: they are *men of corrupt*

minds, and reprobate concerning the faith; they have lost all sound judgment, and made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. A corrupt head, a corrupt heart, and a vicious life, usually attend and accompany one another; loose principles dispose men to loose and licentious practices: such as are latitudinarians in opinion, are oftentimes so in practice too. An heretical head and upright heart are incompatible; a good conscience and a true faith, like Hippocrate's twins, live and die together.

9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

Here our apostle encourages Timothy, and in him all the succeeding ministers of the gospel to the end of the world, against all the discouragements which either he or they might meet with from the impostors and seducers of the times, by assuring them of the issue and event of these trials; first, that God will put a bar in their way, *that they proceed no further in their hypocritical and juggling practices.* Learn thence, That heretics and seducers are limited and bounded by God: they cannot do all the mischief they would, and they shall not do all they can. Secondly, That God would make their folly and madness manifest to their own confusion: their folly shall be discovered, and then abhorred, as was the folly and madness of Jannes and Jambres. Learn, That God will, in his own time, by the preaching of the word, discover false teachers and their delusions to the world.

10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, 11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

A special mean is here propounded how Timothy and his successors may be preserved from the seduction of false teachers, namely, by setting before themselves the example of the great apostle St. Paul; we are more easily led by precedents than by precepts, therefore the apostle propounds his own example as a pattern: *Thou hast fully known my doctrine, my manner of life and conversation, my purpose to adhere to my faith in Christ, my long-suffering, and patience in undergoing persecutions for him, at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, and how God was graciously pleased to deliver*

me out of all. Learn hence, 1. That younger ministers ought especially to observe the doctrine and conversation of the elder, the pious way and walking of the graver ministers, and must follow them. Aged Paul propounds his virtue to young Timothy for imitation, *Thou hast fully known my doctrine and manner of life; my doctrine to be sound and sincere, my life to be holy and unblamable.* Learn, 2. That it is both lawful and laudable, at some times, and upon some occasions, to mention both the graces which God hath wrought in us, and also the sufferings and persecutions which we endure and undergo for him. *Thou knowest what persecutions I endured at Antioch, at Iconium, and Lystra.* Learn, 3. That always opposition, and often persecutions, attend the preaching of the gospel wherever it goes. St. Paul went to Antioch, from Antioch to Iconium, and from Iconium to Lystra, preaching the gospel; but persecution followed him hard at the heels wherever he went. But observe how the goodness of God accompanied him too, *Out of them all the Lord delivered me; not only our dangers, but our deliverances also, must be recorded and observed.* Observe farther, How the apostle argues from his own persecutions in particular to all the godly persecutions in general: *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution; mark, not this or that godly man, but all, every one without exception: the better the men, the sooner persecuted; the devil shoots his arrow at the whitest and fairest mark.* Again, all that *will*, he doth not say all that wish well to godliness, but all that *will*, all that are absolutely resolved so to do. And farther, if he will *live*, if he can or will keep his godliness in his heart, and not discover it in his life, he may escape hatred and persecution: but if he will live religiously, let him look for persecution. Observe farther, It is said, he that will live godly; not living civilly, but living godly, exposes to the world scorn and hatred; in a word, his godliness in Christ Jesus, that is, such godliness as is exerted in the virtue, strength, and power, of Christ Jesus particularly. Godliness in Christ Jesus is real and true godliness: 'tis exact godliness, 'tis an active godliness, 'tis a prevailing godliness, it is a world-condemning godliness; such godliness cannot escape the world's hatred. Learn, That all those that show forth the power of religion in an holy conversation, must look for persecution.

13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Our apostle having acquainted us in the former verse with the condition of the godly, that they must expect and prepare for persecution; he lets us in this verse understand the miserable condition of the wicked, that they *wax worse and worse*; their profligacy is mere apostasy, they actively deceive others, and are passively deceived themselves, by the devil, that lying spirit, that grand impostor. Learn hence, That the prosperous estate of wicked men is much more dangerous and miserable than the afflicted, persecuted condition of the godly; the good by persecution grow better, but the wicked by living easy *wax worse and worse*.

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Several arguments are here made use of, by St. Paul, to press Timothy to the duty of perseverance in the doctrine of Christ, contained in the holy scriptures; the first is drawn from the authority of the person from whom he had received that doctrine, to wit, St. Paul himself, an inspired apostle of Jesus Christ. Continue in the things which thou hast learned; that is, from me, and by me as an authorized apostle. All the servants of God, but especially the ministers of God, must continue constant in the faith, and steadfast in the truth received. The second argument of Timothy's adhering to the doctrine of the scriptures, is drawn from his long acquaintance with the scriptures, even from his childhood, yea, from his infancy: *From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, &c.* And the argument lies thus, "Thou, O Timothy, hast learnt the scriptures from thy infancy; now what a shame would it be for thee, who hast been taught so early the true religion, to turn from it and forsake it; from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, from a suckling, as the word signifies." From whence learn, That it is the duty of parents to instruct their children betimes in the holy and good word of God; we read before of the care that Timothy's mother and grandmother took in that matter. Observe, 2. The title given to the word of God,—the holy scriptures; they are holy in their author, holy in their matter, holy in their penman, holy in their end and design, which is to make us holy, *John xvi. 17.* The word of God is not

only pure but purifying, not only clean but cleansing. Observe, 3. the high commendation given of the word, *It is able to make thee wise unto salvation*; no knowledge can bring us to salvation without the knowledge of the holy scriptures; the philosophers will teach you moral wisdom, but not a word of salvation by a Redeemer, without whom our salvation is impossible; it is here added,—*wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*. Learn, thence, that the holy scriptures, though they instruct us in the way of salvation, yet cannot save us without faith in Christ Jesus.

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,

Our apostle closes this chapter with an exhortation to Timothy to persevere in his study of the holy scriptures, by an argument drawn, 1. From the dignity and authority of the scriptures; 2. From their utility; 3. From their perfection. 1. From their dignity and authority, *They are given by the inspiration of God*: that is, they are not the contrivance of any man's wit and fancy, but a revelation of the mind and will of God; and those that wrote them were excited to it, and assisted in it, by the Spirit of God; no part of scripture had either angels or men for its author, but every part of scripture is divinely inspired or breathed by God, both for matter and order, style and words. A second argument is drawn from the utility and sufficiency of the holy scriptures; they are *profitable for doctrine and instruction*, teaching us what to know and believe in order to salvation, concerning God, and Christ, and ourselves, &c. *for reproof* of error, and confutation of false doctrines, *for correction* of sin and evil manners, *for instruction in righteousness*, directing us how to lead a holy and righteous life, according to the will of God. A third argument is taken from the perfection of them; they are able to make *the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*; that is, to make the ministers of Christ complete in knowledge, faith, and holiness, every way fitted for their work and duty, as Christians, and as ministers. Observe here, 1. That the scriptures of the Old Testament, and not of the New, must be the scriptures here intended, they being the only scriptures which Timothy had known from a child; that was before 12;

scriptures of the new Testament were written. Observe, 2. That the apostle doth not say that these scriptures were of themselves sufficient to make Timothy wise unto salvation, but only that with faith in Christ Jesus they were sufficient for that end; much more then must the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament together, when accompanied with faith in Jesus Christ, be sufficient for that end. Observe, 3. That the scriptures are a perfect, plain, and sufficient rule, in all things necessary to salvation 1. They are a perfect rule; because the writers of them were inspired, and consequently their writings are infallible. 2. They are a plain rule; otherwise they would be no rule at all, of no more use to direct our faith and practice than a sun-dial in a dark room is to tell us the hour of the day. A rule that is not plain, whatever it may be in itself, is of no use to us till it is made plain. 3. They are a sufficient rule; they are able to make the man of God *perfect*, and wise to salvation. Here the church of Rome distinguishes, and says, the scriptures are sufficient to salvation, but not to instruction; to whom one of the martyrs replied, "If so, God send me the salvation and you the instruction." It is conceived by some that this was the last epistle that ever St. Paul wrote; if so, this is the last charge that ever he gave, and concerns us the more to attend to the solemnity of it. The chapter before us is St. Paul's *Cyanea Cantio*, his last and sweetest song; by a spiritual sagacity he saw his end approaching, and the time of his martyrdom to be at hand; he therefore, like a dying man, adjures Timothy in a most awful and tremendous manner, to preach the word with all diligence and care, which he had so highly extolled in the foregoing chapter, as being able to make all persons wise unto salvation.

CHAP. IV.

I CHARGE thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.

Observe here, 1. A most solemn adjuration and charge given, *I charge thee before God and our Lord Jesus Christ*, the judge of quick and dead. Lord! what oplate can stupify the conscience of a minister, that he shall not feel the authority of such a

charge, or not be awakened by such ardent expressions! How can they appear before the most high and everlasting Judge! What will be a sufficient defence before his enlightened tribunal? If such in the last judgment, who neglected to feed the poor with material bread, shall be placed at Christ's left hand; how can those whose office it is to dispense spiritual bread, if they neglect to do it, escape condemnation! Observe, 2. The subject matter of the charge to preach according to Christ's commission, Mat. xxviii. 19. *Go, preach and baptize*: to preach the word, not the fancies and inventions of men, but the wholesome word of God; and the whole word of God, both law and gospel, the one to keep men from presumption, the other from despair; to be instant and active, urgent and zealous, in the discharge of his duty, in all the parts of it, in instruction, rephension, and exhortation; and this *with all long-suffering*, patience, and lenity, undergoing meekly the contradiction of sinners, and the reproaches of men: and for the time to do it *in season, and out of season*, that is, to take all occasions, and to be thankful to God for all opportunities of preaching his word: the lazy may find a thousand excuses, but willing minds know no difficulties; they consider the price paid for souls, and the account that must be given of them. Observe, 3. The person to whom this charge is given; to Timothy, an ordained person, one set apart for the work: this is not a work common to all, but peculiar to some; God's *Timothies* only, who are called and set apart by imposition of hands for the work of the ministry, must preach the word; and such ought to take all occasions, and be very instant in so doing, 1 Cor. ix. 16. *Necessity is laid upon us; yea, woe be unto us if we preach not the gospel.*

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: 4 And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Here we have the reason of our apostle's solemn adjuration in the foregoing verses, by which he stirs up Timothy to a careful discharge of his duty; namely, in regard of the apostasy of the times, in which many would grow weary of sound doctrine, and follow fables. Here note, 1. The ground of this apostasy: men's hatred to the truth: *They will not endure sound doctrine*, that is, they will reject and abhor it; they

love their lusts above God's law, and will not endure to hear it. A second ground of their apostasy is, a delight in false teachers: *they heap up to themselves such as will claw their itching ears*, and gratify their wanton desires, and in no wise disturb their lusts. Thirdly, Here is the doleful issue and dreadful consequence of this their malicious contempt of the truth; *they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables*; that is, say some, to the fabulous divinity of the *Gnostics*, made up of Gentilism and Judaism; the fabulous traditions of the Jewish doctors, say others. Learn hence, 1. That Christian doctrine is sound doctrine, wholesome words. 2. Unsound persons cannot endure sound doctrine; sore eyes cannot abide the light. 3. That in the last days there will be many teachers to claw and gratify itching ears. 4. That the more false teachers do abound, the more careful and industrious should the ministers of Christ be to oppose them, by preaching sound doctrine.

5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Behold here a fourfold duty pressed upon Timothy; 1. Watchfulness: *Watch thou in all things*. As if he had said, "False teachers will beset you round on every side; therefore guard and watch every where." 2. Courage: *Endure afflictions*: he that fears the frowns of men, can never discharge his duty faithfully to God. 3. Fidelity: *Do the work of an evangelist*: which was an extraordinary, and therefore but a temporary, office, to assist the apostles in preaching and publishing the gospel from place to place; they watered what the apostles planted. 4. Sincerity: *Make full proof of thy ministry*: so fulfil all the parts of it, that none may charge thee with the neglect of any part of thy duty: let the world see that thou makest it thine own and only work to win souls. Learn hence, 1. That the apostasy and looseness of the times we live in must oblige all persons, but especially the ministers of Christ, to watch: who should watch, if not the watchmen? Learn hence, 2. That ministers, of all men, need courage: they must insure themselves to endure hardship, and expect hard words, hard dealing, nicknames, and all kind of reproaches; and these must be endured with patience, with courage, and with constancy. Learn, 3. That ministers must make full proof of their ministry; that is, must fully and faith-

fully discharge all the duties of their calling, not do their duties by halves; but accomplish all the parts of their ministry, strengthening the weak, comforting the afflicted, reducing the wandering, and adorning their doctrine by a pure and unblamable conversation. This is to fulfil our ministry.

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Our apostle being now come almost to the end of his Christian and ministerial race, he first looks downward into his grave with comfort, ver. 6. and sees his death a pleasing sacrifice to God, and a sweet departure to him; *I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand*. Next he looks backward, and reflects upon his well-spent life with joy: *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course*, ver. 7. Last of all he looks upward, and there sees heaven prepared for him, v. 8. *Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness*. Observe, 1. St. Paul's intimation of his death: I am ready to be offered up; a sacrificial word, "I am ready to be poured out as a drink-offering; my death will be a sweet sacrifice to God, my blood being shed for Christ, as the wine was poured out in the meat-offering." Learn hence, That the death of God's ministers, especially of such as die martyrs, is a most pleasing sacrifice unto God: precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of all, but especially of such saints. Observe, 2. St. Paul's narration of his life: *I have fought, I have finished, &c.* The word run is a figure taken from the Olympic games, where was combating, wrestling, running, according to the laws of the games, and judges appointed to declare the victors, and to give them the prize, a crown of garlands. The first metaphor is taken from a soldier, a combatant, a champion; *I have fought a good fight*. Learn, Every sincere Christian, but especially every faithful minister, is a spiritual soldier; their enemies are spiritual, their weapons spiritual, their warfare spiritual, their victory spiritual; they must be men of courage, men of conduct, men that can endure hardship, men of unity and activity among themselves. The

second metaphor is taken from a strenuous runner; *I have finished my course*, "I am come to the period of my days, and to the end of my race;" alluding perhaps to his course of life after his conversion, which was wholly spent in running from place to place to preach the gospel. And now he was come to the last stage or goal at Rome, where he was to receive his garland, his crown of martyrdom. Learn hence, A Christian's life is a race, which he must not only cheerfully begin, but perseveringly finish: so says the apostle here, "I, Paul the aged, have fought the good fight, &c., have not only begun, but finished, my course." O what a comfort is it to be an old soldier of Jesus Christ! St. Paul is now reckoned to be sixty-one years of age when he suffered martyrdom; he runs his race patiently, cheerfully, reservedly, and perseveringly. The third metaphor is taken from depositories, who faithfully keep things committed to their trust without embezzlement. This *depositum*, the Christian faith, St. Paul had kept; *I have kept the faith*. He kept first, the grace of faith; secondly, the doctrine of faith, inviolable; endeavouring to transmit it down to posterity, in despite of the legal Jew, or the profane Gentile. Observe, 3. St. Paul's expectation of his reward: *Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, &c.* Here note, The reward is a crown of righteousness, because only given to righteous men: the person rewarding, Christ, the righteous judge: the person rewarded, me, St. Paul himself, and all the faithful that love Christ's appearing: the certainty of the reward, *it is laid up*, reserved and kept safe, as an inheritance for a child: the time of the reward, *in that day*, the great day of the Lord, when he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. Learn hence, 1. That the reward which God has in hand for his faithful servants, is no less than a crown of glory. 2. That the time when this reward shall be fully and finally dispensed, is the great day. 3. It is the property of the godly to look, love, and long, for that day.

9 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: 10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica: Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry. 12 And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.

Our apostle comes now, in this second

part of the chapter, to treat of some private and personal affairs. And first he desires Timothy to come speedily to him, having a great desire to see him, and be comforted by him, before he died. The strongest of Christians may sometimes be helped by the weaker; a Paul may stand in need of a Timothy; there is not a member in the body, but is some way serviceable to the head. Secondly, He assigns a reason why he did thus desire Timothy's presence, because of Demas' and others' absence; Demas had forsaken him, *having loved this present world*. The best may sometimes be forsaken by their bosom friends; Demas was such to St. Paul, yet left him. For what cause! For the love of the world, This, when it grows inordinate, will cause a man first to forsake his friend, and then his God. Thirdly, Crescens was gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia, Tychicus to Ephesus: all of them, no doubt, to spread the gospel, to plant or water the churches. Good men will be doing good wherever they are, wherever they come or go. Only Luke was with him; nothing could separate that good man from him. A faithful friend loveth at all times; yet friendship (*olla amicicia*) will vanish in adversity: but true Christian friendship is perpetual, the foundation of it is eternal. Lastly, he desires Timothy to bring Mark with him; not for rest or recreation, because he wanted a companion for his diversion; no, but to assist him in his work: *Bring Mark: for he is profitable to me for the ministry*. 'Tis happy when the ministers of God affect the company, and desire the presence, of each other, for spiritual ends and religious purposes.

13 The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.

St. Paul having desired Timothy's company at Rome, requests him to bring with him such things as he wanted, and stood in present need of. 1. His *cloak*: probably a garment which in the winter season he might want the warmth and benefit of, especially being in a cold prison. So long as we are upon earth, a prudential care must be taken to preserve our health; when winter approached, St. Paul sent for his winter garment to keep him warm. The body is the soul's organ or instrument by which it acts; therefore we must do what in us lieth to keep it in tune for the service of the soul. 2. His *books*; probably the book of the Old Testament; certainly no profane books; he had no leisure for,

no liking to, any such. 3. *But especially the parchments*; these are thought to be note-books of his own collecting, in which he had written several things for the help of his memory, and the benefit of the church. Behold here, 1. An eminent pattern of pious studiousness in St. Paul. Here was an aged man, an aged minister, that had already read much, a prisoner; no very proper place for study, were prisons then filled with such brutes as generally now; nay, a dying prisoner, one that looked for death and beheading every day; yet aged Paul, dying Paul, cannot live without his books; he must still be reading, learning, studying the scriptures especially, which are such a vast deep, as the line of an inspired apostle could not fathom. Behold, I say, a pattern for such ministers as think they know enough, they have studied enough, and are too old to learn; so was not our apostle, when within a few months of his death. 2. Behold here an eminent pattern of pious humility in Timothy, if bishop of Ephesus now, as some affirm, if only minister of a particular church, as others affirm; yet was he undoubtedly a very humble person, otherwise St. Paul had not desired, and Timothy had certainly disdained, to carry this luggage with him to Rome. Pride would have stooped to nothing of this, but thrown all to the dung-hill: whereas true humility disposes a man, especially a minister of Christ, to become all things to all men.

14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works. 15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

Here our apostle, 1. Complains of the injuries and oppositions which he had met with from *Alexander the coppersmith*, who was before a great professor, but now become a grievous persecutor. He made shipwreck of the faith, 1 Tim. i. 19. which he did before profess; nay, 'tis thought this man, *Acts xix. 33.* was near martyrdom, yet afterwards an opposer of the truth. The best things corrupted, become worst; the sweetest wine makes the sharpest vinegar. Be not offended, then, if at any time you see professors turn blasphemers; nay, preachers themselves turn persecutors. Observe, 2. An apostolical prediction, rather than a dreadful imprecation, passed upon Alexander: *The Lord reward him according to his works*; The Lord will reward him according to his works. The apostle by a prophetic spirit saw what was com-

ing upon him, and foretells his doom. Imprecations against the enemies of the church, if lawful, yet must be cautiously and very rarely used: what we find in scripture looking like such, are rather to be accounted predictions, than imprecations. Observe, lastly, The caution given to Timothy to shun him: *Of whom be thou ware also*, for he is an opposer of the truth. Wicked men do not so much oppose the ministers, as the ministry; not so much oppose preachers, as preaching. 'Tis the light of truth which evil-doers hate; because it has a searching, discovering, condemning power. St. Paul doth not complain of Alexander's unkindness towards him, but of his malicious resisting the truth, and hindering the preaching of the gospel: *He hath greatly withstood our words.*

16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

Our apostle here complains of the timorousness of weak Christians in their carriage towards him, at his first appearing before Nero the emperor of Rome, or some of his officers; they deserted him, they all deserted him, very few durst own him. But this was out of weakness and timorousness, not of maliciousness, as Alexander in the former verse; therefore St. Paul prays for them, *God would not lay it to their charge*, but pity and pardon their infirmity. Learn hence, How hard it will go with the holiest of saints: if God should lay but one sin, though a sin of infirmity, to their charge, it would sink them to the lowest hell. Lord! how sad must it then be to have the sins of a wicked man's whole life charged upon him! Learn, 2. That the holiest servants of God in a suffering hour, may and must expect to be left alone, forsaken of all their friends, none daring to open their mouth, and speak a word for them. The apostle met with it here, and a greater than he before him; when Christ was apprehended all the disciples forsook him and fled.

17 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

That is, "Though man forsook me, God stood by me: the Lord Jesus strengthened me, that by me, thus standing up in the defence of the gospel, the preaching of it might be fully known, and that all the

Gentiles might hear the defence of it: and thus, for that time, I was delivered out of Nero's hands, that bloody lion's mouth." Learn, 1. That whilst God has any further work for his servants to do, he will assist and sustain them in despite of all opposition and discouragement whatsoever: though Nero roar, and persecutors rage, and friends desert, yet God will stand by, God will deliver, till his faithful servants have finished their work. *The Lord stood by me, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion*, says the holy apostle. See here the certain character of the church's enemies: they are lions, lions for power, lions for policy, lions for terror, lions for cruelty: God sometimes delivers his people, and saves them from (sometimes suffers his dearest children to fall into) the paws, yea, the mouths, of these devouring lions.

18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Mark, He doth not say, The Lord will deliver me from every evil worker, but *from every evil work*; though he doth not save me from my temporal enemies, blessed be God, my spiritual enemies shall never hurt me, neither sin nor Satan. Lord! it is a far greater favour to be preserved from sin, than from any temporal affliction that can befall us, yea, than from death itself! *The Lord will deliver me from every evil work*; yea, farther, *He will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom*. God has a kingdom, an heavenly kingdom, for all his saints, his suffering saints especially; it is prepared for them, they are preparing for it, and they shall be put into the possession of it in due time. He closes with a doxology here, *To whom be glory for ever and ever*, Amen. As God has prepared an eternal kingdom for his saints, so they desire that God may have glory from them to eternal ages. Grace enlargeth the heart towards God, in fervent desires that his glory may be eternized.

19 Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

Observe here, How mindful the apostle is of his absent friends; though he was now in prison, and they a great way from him, yet he sends pious salutations to them. This Prisca, or Priscilla, and Aquila, are often remembered by St. Paul; he lodged in their house at Corinth. The saints and servants of God forget not one another, when at the ends of the earth.

He salutes also Onesiphorus and his household, wife and children, and servants. Thus do pious governors procure a blessing upon their families as well as upon their persons. Onesiphorus is not only prayed for himself, and saluted singly, but likewise his household also: *Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus*.

20 Erastus abode at Corinth; but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

Erastus is mentioned, *Rom. xvi. 23.* as chamberlain of the city of Corinth, one that showed kindness to Paul; he was a great man, the treasurer of the city of Corinth; yet neither his riches, nor his great place, could keep him from loving the apostle and the afflicted church of God. Rarely are great men good, and as rarely are good men great; yet some great men are good, and some good men are great. Lot and Abraham, Job and David, were full of riches, yet full of piety, under the Old Testament; so was Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Zaccheus, under the New. Thus God magnifies the power of converting grace. *Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick*. This man was a citizen of Ephesus, a disciple and companion of St. Paul, *Acts xx.* whom he was forced to leave sick at Miletum. Note, Strength of grace cannot prevail against bodily weaknesses and diseases; sickness may seize even the best men. Note also, That the apostles had not the gift of healing when they pleased, but only when God gave it to them.

21 Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren,

Our apostle being greatly desirous to see Timothy before his death, reneweth his request and suit to him to make haste and come before winter: the personal presence of good men is much, very much, desired by them, in order to excite and quicken each other. To encourage Timothy to hasten to him, he names several persons of note that were then at Rome, who sent salutations to him, and would rejoice to see him. But where were all these, when our apostle was upon his trial? *Ans.* They all forsook him, and not one of them stood with him. Behold what frailty there may be, and what fear will do, in persons of choice note for eminency and grace in the church of God!

22 The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

The apostle concludes this like his other epistles, with an apostolical benediction, *The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit*; as if he had said, "Be not sad at my departure; for though I must leave thee, yet the Lord will uphold thee by his grace, and be present with thee by the influence of his Holy Spirit." The inward presence of Christ with the spirits of his people, directing their spirits in thinking, judging, choosing, and refusing, is a sweet privilege, and greatly to be desired. Happy they who have the Spirit of Christ perpetually present with them: who so live, that Christ may delight to dwell by his Spirit in them. *Grace be with you*, that is,

with all of you; he doth not say, riches be with you, honours be with you, or the favour of man be with you; but grace, and the favour of God, be with you. God's special favour and distinguishing grace is to be sought by all persons, above and before all things. Lastly, Our apostle ratifies and seals up all with that concluding particle, *AMEN*; teaching us, That whatever we should pray for should be rightly understood, firmly believed, and earnestly desired, and heartily consented to: they sin in prayer, who understand not what they pray for, and who do not earnestly desire what they pray for; for in testimony of our desires to be heard, we say, *Amen*.

THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO
TITUS.

St. Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus, are the church's canons, which the Holy Ghost indited, very sufficient to their use and end. O how happy had the church been in all ages, if strict canonical obedience had been paid, as well as sworn, unto them. Titus was a Gentile, converted early to Christianity by St. Paul, who having great experience of his piety and prudence, left him in Crete, to govern the church of God in that island. This Epistle to Titus is of the same nature, and wrote with the same design, as those to Timothy, only shorter; because Titus seems to have been the ancients and more experienced person; St. Paul briefly instructs him in all the parts of his duty, in electing church governors, in censuring false teachers, in instructing the ancient and younger persons, in pressing upon all persons obedience to magistrates, and a care to maintain good works.

CHAP. I.

Titus being placed by St. Paul in Crete, St. Paul writes to him how he ought to demean himself there, by appointing in every city bishops or elders, to teach and govern those that were already, or should afterwards, be converted to the faith of Christ; exhorting him to be very careful to make choice of worthy and fit persons into this high and honourable office, men of sound doctrine, and unblameable lives.

PAUL, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; 2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; 3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me, according to the commandment of God our Saviour; 4 To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

These verses contain the apostle's salutation, and the first part of this chapter; in which observe, 1. The person saluting, described by his name, *Paul*; by his general office, *a servant of God*; by his special office, *an apostle of Jesus Christ*; by the end

of his office, to *preach the faith*, and thereby to promote the faith of God's elect, and to bring persons to the acknowledgment of the doctrine of the gospel, which is truth according to godliness. Learn hence, That the great design and end of preaching the gospel, is, to produce faith in the heart, and holiness or godliness in the life, of those that sit under it; not that common, notional, and intellectual faith, which is oftentimes found in unholy persons: but that lively faith, which is elsewhere called *the faith of the operation of God*, and here, *the faith of God's elect*; even such a faith as is the parent and principle of obedience. Observe, 2. The apostle declares a farther end of his office, namely, to raise Christians up to a lively hope and expectation of that *eternal life*, which that God, who cannot lie, hath promised before the world began. But how could God then promise, when there was none to promise to? *Ans.* The promise was made to Christ, and in him to all his members: for there was a federal transaction betwixt the Father and the Son from all eternity; the Son promised to give his soul an offering for sin, and the Father engaged that he should see his seed, and the travail of his soul. Observe, 3. How God, who promised us in Christ eternal life before all time, did accomplish and make good that word in the fulness of time. Verse 3. *He hath in due time man-*

'fested his word through preaching; that is, What God so long ago purposed in himself, and promised to his Son, he hath in the fit-test appointed season made manifest by the preaching of the gospel, which is committed to me by the appointment of God and Christ. Learn hence, That the doctrine of salvation is much more clearly revealed to us that live under the gospel, than it was to the fathers of the Old Testament. Life and immortality, that is, the clearer knowledge and more full assurance of eternal life, is now brought about by the preaching of the gospel. Observe, 4. The person saluted, Titus, described by his relation. St. Paul's son in the faith; he begat him by his ministry unto God, was the instrument of his conversion unto Christianity; his son after the common faith. Where note, That the church has but one faith common to all Christians, it has one common object of faith, Christ crucified; it has one common end of faith, eternal salvation; this is the end of every believer's faith and hope. Observe lastly, The salvation itself: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour; that is, all spiritual, temporal, and eternal blessings, I most heartily wish unto you, from God the Father, and Jesus Christ our worthy Mediator. Learn hence, That whatever spiritual grace or temporal blessings we now receive from God, is from him not barely as a Creator, but as a Father, a gracious Father in Christ, in whom he pours forth the immensity of his love upon us, and through whom he conveys all kind of blessings unto us.

5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

Observe here, 1. The erection of a power in the person of Titus: *I left thee in Crete to ordain elders*; "I, who am an apostle of Christ, and have received a commission from him thus to do, *I left thee*, thee who wert so dear to me, so useful to me; yet for the church's service did I deny myself, and part with thee. Behold here, a blessed pattern of our ministerial imitation. St. Paul did, and could most cheerfully, sacrifice all his private advantages, the tenderest and inmost of his affections, to the benefit of the church, and the interest of religion; let us go and do likewise. Observe, 2. The end of this institution, or the use and exercise of this power: to order, and to ordain, to correct and constitute; 1. *To set in order things that are wanting*; the

ship of the church is never so well rigged, but something is wanting that might be added; whilst the tabernacle of God sojourns here below, some pin or other will be lacking in it. 2. *To ordain elders in every city*, such as might govern and teach, and administer to God in holy things; wherever a church is planted, there is an absolute necessity of a settled ministry, and a succession of ministers, without which it is impossible that religion should either prosper or long continue: and care must be taken that such ministers be duly qualified, and regularly ordained. *I left thee in Crete to ordain elders.* Observe, 3. The limitation of these acts, according to the apostle's prescription, *As I had appointed thee.* Titus must do nothing but according to commission, and by special direction. Where note, That the ordering and governing of the church was not left arbitrary, no, not to Titus himself; but whatever he did, was done by apostolical direction: *For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain elders in every city, as I appointed thee.*

6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly, **7** For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; **8** But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; **9** Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

Here St. Paul gave Titus, as he had before done Timothy, the character of such persons as were to be admitted into the sacred function. The character is twofold, positive and negative; he shows them both what they should be, and what they should not be. The positive characters of a bishop, yea, of every one that administers to God in holy things, are these: he must be *blameless*, free from scandal, not blameworthy; a minister's life should be so bright and shining, that all persons who behold it may admire it, and guide their lives by the direction and example of it. *The husband of one wife*, that is at once, the apostle's command doth not forbid successive marriages: for this he elsewhere allows: see the note on 1 Tim. iii. 2. Nor does the command oblige him to marry at all, but it establishes the lawfulness of a bishop's marriage, if he sees reason for it, yet, no doubt, by these words, *the husband*

of one wife, St. Paul proposes a greater degree of chastity to church governors than to other persons. *Having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly*; Titus must not only look at the person he is to ordain, but to the family and household of the person ordained, that they be well governed; because the honour of religion, and the reputation of the church suffers exceedingly, when any of the bishop's family, his children especially, are riotous and unruly; besides, the world will pronounce them unfit to govern the church of God, that cannot command their own families. *As the steward of God*; the steward is an appointed and deputed officer, he acts by commission, and distributes his Lord's allowance according to his Lord's command, and is accountable for all he does; and as he is over the inferior servants, so must he be a pattern and precedent for them; a steward must be both wise and faithful. *A lover of hospitality, sober, temperate*. Mark, Of hospitality, not of luxury and sensuality; as he commends hospitality, so he regulates it too, a *lover of hospitality*, yet *sober and temperate*; riotous housekeeping is not hospitality in St. Paul's account, but the liberal and free relieving of such as are in necessities and straits. *Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught*; he must be a person well instructed, well settled and confirmed in the faith, of ability to defend the faith, and to stop the mouth of gain-sayers;—*just, holy, and a lover of good men*, a person of strict holiness and piety towards God, of exact righteousness, and justice towards men, and a sincere lover of all good men. These are positive characters required in a bishop. The negatives follow, and they are five: *not self-willed*, not so adhering to his own resolutions, that nothing can force him from them; he that is of an inflexible will, had need be of an infallible judgment; *not soon angry*, and subject to passion; for he stands in God's place, and ought to resemble God in long-suffering and patience: *not given to wine*, that is, too much wine, no inordinate lover of it; no sinner at wine, either in his own house or elsewhere: no *striker*, either with the hand or with the tongue: *not given to filthy lucre*, seeking to get wealth by sordid ways and means; the sin of covetousness is not so base in any man as in a minister; many are unjustly charged with it, but where it is really found it is a sordid sin. How unfit is he to administer in holy things to God, who prefers the world before God! By making a god of the world, we make an idol of God.

10 For there are many unruly and

vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped; who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

A reason is here subjoined by our apostle, why Titus should take such special care to fill the church with able guides, namely, because there was a multitude of false teachers dispersed abroad, and scattered up and down everywhere, particularly the judaizing doctors, those of the circumcision, mentioned *Acts xv.* who would make Christianity nothing more than a supplement to the law of Moses. These he tells Titus must have their mouths stopped, not by force, for Titus had no power of the sword, but by confutation; he must take care to ordain such as might silence them, though not satisfy them. For mark the efficacy of error, and the power of seduction, *they subvert whole houses*, they make proselytes without number. Learn hence, That such is the strength of error, and the weakness and unsteadiness of many Christians, that whole households may be subverted by the most gross deceivers. If the apostle's converts were thus easily and universally misled, no wonder if ours be so.

12 One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are all liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. 13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply; that they may be sound in the faith; 14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men that turn from the truth.

The next argument St. Paul makes use of to excite Titus to take great care how he behaved himself at Crete, and what bishops he left there, is drawn from the quality and nature of the people in that island of Crete, where God's providence and the apostle's care had placed him: he tells him, that one of their own prophets, or poets, Epimenides, had given this character of them, that the Cretians were a lazy and a lying people, ready enough to be misled by the false teachers, particularly the judaizing doctors, who imposed circumcision and other ceremonial rites upon them, which were now old fables, but tended to pervert men from the truth; therefore he charges Titus to reprove sharply and cuttingly, *that they may be sound in faith*. The word is a metaphor taken

from surgeons, who cut out dead flesh to the quick, but it is in order to healing; cutting words have done great cures: many a diseased, festered soul has been made sound, both in faith and manners, by severe reprehension. Learn hence, That although, generally speaking, we ought to temper our reproofs with much gentleness and meekness, yet there is a time when we must reprove *sharply*, that men *may be sound in the faith*. We may, we must, speak cutting words, when kind words will not do.

15 Unto the pure, all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

Here our apostle intimates what those Jewish traditions and fables were, which those judaizing doctors and false teachers would intrude and impose upon persons at that time, namely, pretences that men were defiled by eating things unclean, by not observing their days, and keeping other ceremonial rites: but says the apostle, *To the pure all things are pure*; that is, to believers who are sanctified by the Christian faith, and purified from sin and guilt, all meats, and days, and things of this nature, are clean and lawful, and may without sin be used, every creature being sanctified by the word of God and prayer. Here note, The honourable title which a gracious and merciful God puts upon good men, notwithstanding they have much impurity and sin inhering in them, and many sinful weaknesses and infirmities cleaving to them, yet God calls them pure; *Unto the pure, &c.* They are now initially so, and shall ere long be perfectly so. Note, 2. A privilege purchased for them by the blood of Christ, and that is the lawful liberty and use of all meats, &c. under the gospel, which were prohibited by, and forbidden under, the ceremonial law: *Unto the pure, all things are now pure.*

—But unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure;

Mark, he doth not say, to the defiled all things are unclean, but, *nothing is pure*; they pollute all they touch. To an unsanctified man nothing is sanctified; whatever he does is unclean, either in the matter, in the manner, or in the end, of his doing it; and the reason follows, because *their mind and conscience are defiled*. No wonder the streams are polluted, when the fountains are poisoned. *The mind and conscience are defiled*, partly by blindness, partly by stupidity and senselessness.

16 They profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Behold here the dismal character of many hypocritical persons in the Jewish church. They professed the knowledge of God, the true God, but in their works, in their lives and actions, they denied him, and so became abominable both to God and man, disobedient to the law, and averse to every good work. Here learn, 1. That hypocrites are generally great professors, they profess great knowledge of God, and great zeal for him. 2. That to deny God is a very heinous sin, and an abominable wickedness: There is a twofold denial of God, first, in words expressly and openly; secondly, in practice, closely and consequentially. *They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him*. There may be at once a professing of God, and a denial of him: many a man's practice speaks aloud, that there is no God, when he makes a fair confession and profession of him with his mouth and tongue. Learn, 3. That no sorts of persons are so odious to God, and abominable in his sight, as those who make a profession of his holy name and truth, but walk contrary in their lives to their profession.

CHAP. II.

Our apostle in this chapter directs Titus how to discharge his duty faithfully, as a minister of Christ, in preaching the gospel; advising him to instruct all, both young and old, parents and children, masters and servants, in the practice of their relative and respective duties one towards another. that God might be glorified, and religion adorned: and here first he instructs him in general to preach to the people wholesome and sound doctrine; and then directs him particularly to apply that doctrine to the several sorts and conditions of men.

BUT speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:

As if our apostle had said, whatever the forementioned judaizing doctors preach, though they doat upon dreams, and feed their hearers with fables and fancies, to poison and corrupt their souls, and turn them from the truth; be sure that thou carriest thyself as becomes a sound preacher of the gospel, and *speak only the things that become sound doctrine*; the body may as soon be nourished with carrion, as the soul with rotten and unsound doctrine. Christian doctrine is sound doctrine. And the ministers of Christ, who feed his people, must take care that they bring such wholesome doctrine to their people as may contribute greatly to their

spiritual health and soundness. *Speak thou the things that become sound doctrine.*

2 That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

By *aged men*, we may understand all ancient men in general, and church-officers in particular, in whom our apostle requires and calls for gravity and sobriety in behaviour, temperance in all things, that they be *sound in faith*, sincere in *charity*, and constant in *patience*. Where note, That our apostle exempted none from the instructions, admonitions, and exhortations of the ministers of God. God's school is as well for the aged as the young, not only for initiating youth, but also for the edifying the aged, and building them up in their most holy faith: the aged have but a little time to be in the world, their nature declines, their days are almost ended, they must therefore labour to recompense a decay of nature with increase of grace, the weakness of body with the strength of faith: *Let the aged men be sound in faith.* Note farther, that sobriety, gravity, temperance, soundness in the faith, eminent charity, and exemplary patience, are the great ornaments of persons in their old age.

3 The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

Instructions are here given for the aged women, as before for the aged men, that is, for all in general: and such aged women in particular as were deaconesses, or servants to the church, that they, being placed in the rank of church-officers, should act and walk as becometh holy persons, employed about holy things: particularly, that their deportment and behaviour be such, both in habit and gesture, as becometh holiness; that they be not *false accusers*; devils, the original signifies, because false-accusing is the devil's work: they that do his work shall bear his name. *Not given to much wine*; excess in drinking is bad in men, worse in women, worst of all in old women, who ought to be patterns of piety and prudence, of sobriety and temperance, to the younger women; for

St. Paul here directs them to *teach the younger*; that is, by their private admonitions and prudent examples instruct them to be wise and sober, not light and airy; and to love their husbands and children in a fit and becoming manner, and to show it in their behaviour; discreet and chaste in all their actions, keeping at home, and minding the affairs of the family; to be kind and obedient to their husbands, lest the miscarriages of young women should bring reproach upon religion, and the gospel be thought by the men of the world to infuse any thing into them contrary to moral virtue. Learn hence, that the wholesome doctrine of the gospel must be preached and practically applied to women as well as to men, and they cannot, without the danger of damnation, despise or neglect the ministry of the word.

6 Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded:

Note here, 1. That the ministers of God must apply themselves and their doctrine to the several sexes, ages, and conditions of their people; that every person, man and woman, young and old, superior and inferior, may know not only what is lawful, but what is expedient, most becometh their quality, and best becoming their age. Here our apostle directs Titus to exhort first the aged men, next the aged women, now the younger men, that they be *sober-minded*, settled in the truth, guided by sound judgment, not governed by passion, not led by sense and appetite, not puffed up with proud conceit: where it is observable, that St. Paul's warnings here given in this chapter to the aged men, the aged women, and the younger men, do intimate to us what vices they are that all sorts of persons are subject to, and most endangered by; and this is the wise improvement that all should make of it, to watch against the sins of their age and condition, their complexion and constitution, their calling and vocation, every sin that doth so easily beset them, and obstructs and hinders them in their Christian course.

7 In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *showing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8 Sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

St. Paul having directed Titus what doctrine to preach, comes now to instruct him what example to lead, in *all things* *showing* *thyself* *a pattern of good works*; as if he had

said, In all the good which thou exhortest thy hearers to, be an eminent pattern of it thyself; that they may see that visibly in thy life, which thou pressest upon them by thy preaching. By piety and good works second thy doctrine; there must be a sweet harmony between a minister's doctrine and his conversation; otherwise he pulls down faster than he builds up: an heterodox conversation will carry an orthodox preacher to hell. He closes this admonition to Titus concerning preaching, with this solemn charge, namely, that his doctrine be sound and profitable, sincere without mixture, grave without levity, sound words that can never be confuted by gainsayers, which must be expected; but happy will you be if they can have nothing justly to charge your doctrine or conversation with. Learn hence, that the ministers of God have ever had, and must always expect, some that will withstand, oppose, and gainsay them, as long as there is a devil in the world: and so long as the ministers of God endeavour to batter down the walls of his kingdom, he will raise up storms about their ears. Learn, 2. That it is the duty, and must be the care and endeavour, of all the ministers of God, to oblige themselves to such an exemplary piety of conversation, as may stop the mouth of slander. *That the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil to say against them.*

9 Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; 10 Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Although Titus, according to some, was a bishop, yea, an archbishop, yet St. Paul exhorts him to look upon the instruction of servants as one part of his charge. *Exhort servants*; the souls of the poorest slaves and servants, for whom the Son of God died, must be of precious account with, and be particularly concerned for, by the highest ambassador of Christ; as all souls had an equal price, so must they have an equal care. Observe, 1. The general duty which servants are exhorted to, and that is, *obedience to their own masters*, in all honest and lawful things, whether their masters were pagans or Christians: if pagans, not thinking that their Christianity freed them from their just commands; if Christian masters, not thinking that they had therefore a greater liberty to be saucy with them, or less obedient to them. Observe, 2. The particular duties here pressed upon

servants, 1. *Not answering again*, not crossing or contradicting what they are commanded, not saucily replying when they are reproved. 2. *Not purloining*, that is, not stealing the least thing, nor taking any thing that is their master's, which is not allowed by their consent, but showing all conscionable trustiness, and that great fidelity and honesty may be found with them. Observe, 3. The argument or motive to stir up servants to this conscionable care, and conscientious discharge of their duty: *that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*; that is, that they may put honour upon Christ and his holy religion, by beautifying their Christian profession by a suitable and becoming conversation. Learn hence, That it is in the power of the poorest and meanest servant to do much good or much hurt to the Christian religion; some might be ready to say, Alas! what good or hurt, what credit or discredit, can a poor servant do to religion! Much every way: He may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by his Christian behaviour as a servant; and the name of God and his doctrine may be blasphemed by him, if he be negligent in his duty. None are so little and so inconsiderable, but they are capable of serving the great ends of religion, capable of doing good service for God on earth, and of being eternally rewarded by God in heaven.

11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

As if the apostle had said, Let all sorts of men, servants and masters, children and parents, old and young, discharge their duties faithfully to God and one another; for the grace of God, discovered in the gospel, has appeared to all men, teaching them to deny all doctrines and practices which are ungodly, and all worldly lusts of sensuality, and that we should live soberly, with respect to ourselves, righteously and charitably towards our neighbour, and holily towards God, in this present world. Note here, 1. A choice and excellent description of the gospel; it is the *grace of God*, that is, the doctrine of God's free grace and gratuitous favour declared in Christ to poor sinners. Note, 2. The joyful message which the gospel brings, and that is, salvation: the gospel makes a gracious tender of salvation, and that universally, to lost and undone sinners. Note, 3. The clear light and evidence that it doth hold forth

this message in and by; it *has appeared* or shined forth like the day-star, or the rising sun. Note, 4. The extent of its glorious beams, how far they reach, to all indefinitely, *The grace of God bringing salvation has appeared unto all men*; that is, it is tendered to all without restriction or limitation. 1. As to nations, Jew or Gentile. 2. As to persons, rich or poor, bond or free; 3. Without restriction, as to the number and greatness of their sins; 4. Without restriction in reference to the degree of their graces. Note, 5. The great lesson which the gospel teaches, negative and positive; 1. Negative, *To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*; where, by *ungodliness*, understand all sins committed against the first table; by *worldly lusts*, all sins committed against the second table; called *worldly lusts*, because the object of them is worldly things, and because they are the lusts of worldly men. 2. Positive, *to live*, 1. *Soberly*: he begins with our duty to ourselves, then to our neighbour, and last of all to God, and so proceeds from the easier to the harder duties: and observe the connection, *soberly*, and *righteously*, and *godly*, not disjunctively; as if to live soberly, righteously, or in pretence godly, were sufficient. A sobriety in speech, in behaviour, in apparel, in eating and drinking, in recreations, and in the enjoyment of lawful satisfactions. 2. *Righteously*, exercising justice and charity towards our neighbour: he that is uncharitable, is unjust and unrighteous, and the unrighteous shall no more enter into the kingdom of God, than the unholy: and all a person's pretences to godliness are but hypocrisy, without righteousness toward our neighbour. 3. *Godly*; godliness as an internal and external part; the internal and inward part of godliness consists in a right knowledge of him, in a fervent love unto him, in an entire trust and confidence in him, in an holy fear to offend him, in subjecting our wills entirely to him, in holy longings for the fruition and enjoyment of him. The external and outward part of godliness consists in adoration and bodily worship; this is due to God from us; he was the Creator of the body as well as of the soul, the Redeemer of the body as well as of the soul, and will glorify the body as well as the soul; therefore we are to *glorify God with our bodies, and with our spirits, which are the Lord's*. Note, 6. The time when, and the place where, this lesson is to be learnt, *in this present world*. Here is the place, and now is the time when this duty of living *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*, is to be performed by us. Learn, That a sober, righteous, and godly life, *in this present world*, is absolutely

necessary in order to our obtaining the happiness and glory of the world to come. Inference: if so, what a cheat doth that man put upon his soul, who trusts to a death-bed repentance? Be it never so sincere, how can it be said to be a living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this world, when just stepping into eternity?

13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

Observe here, 1. The character given of that reward which the gospel promises to them that live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; this is described, 1. By its futurity, it is *hope*, something expected, and to come; 2. By its transcendency, it is a *blessed hope*. Learn, That the Christian's hope (for the good things hoped for) is laid up, not in this, but in the other world; because this world, and this present state, is not capable of that happiness which the Christian hopes for. It is too great, it is too good, for earth, it is laid up in heaven. Observe, 2. The time and season when this glorious reward and blessed hope shall be dispensed and given forth unto the godly, and that is, *at the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. Where note, A threefold description of Christ, 1. By the immensity of his deity, he is the *great God*. 2. By the graciousness of his office, *our Saviour*. 3. By the glory of his advent, or appearance, *looking for the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. Observe, 3. The Christian's duty, with reference and relation to this reward, and to the appearance of Christ, when it shall be dispensed and given forth, namely, to look and long for that joyful hour. Learn, That the great duty incumbent on all the people of God, is to be continually looking and longing for, hoping and expecting of, the coming and appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: *Looking for the blessed hope, &c.*

14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Observe here, 1. The way and manner how Christ came to be our Saviour, he *gave himself for us*. Note, 1. The giver, *Christ*, he gave. 2. The gift, *himself*. 3. The persons for whom he gave himself, *for us*. Learn, 1. That all that Jesus Christ suffered he did sustain and undergo freely and voluntarily. 2. That that which Christ gave for our redemption was *himself*.

3. That it was especially for his church, that he gave himself, *who gave himself for us*. Observe, 2. The great ends for which Christ gave himself for his church, and they are two: 1. To *redeem them from all iniquity*. 2. To *purify them a peculiar people to himself*. 1. To *redeem them from iniquity*: redemption supposes a thralldom and bondage; redemption from iniquity supposes a thralldom and bondage to sin and iniquity: our Redeemer therefore is *Jesus Christ*, and by dying for us, he did, and only could, redeem us. *He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity*. 2. Another end of Christ's redeeming us, is to *purify us to himself a peculiar people*; Here note, That as redemption did presuppose a bondage, so purification supposes an uncleanness, that is, sin. Note, 2. That Christ's redeemed people are a purified people, and a peculiar people, possessed by the Spirit of Christ with a zeal for good works. Note, 3. That it was not only for us that Christ redeemed and purified us a peculiar people to himself, but ultimately for himself, and for his own and his Father's glory and complacency; that he might *purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*.

15 These things speak, and exhort: and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

As if he had said, Let these necessary practical truths be the subject-matter of thy preaching, and according to the authority of thy office rebuke gainsayers, and let thy doctrine and behaviour in wisdom and gravity be such, as may keep and preserve thee from all contempt. The ministers of Christ are to take special care that they neither expose their persons nor their office, by any indecencies, to contempt: *Let no man despise thee*.

CHAP. III.

In the former chapters our apostle instructed Titus that he should, in the service of his ministry, propound the several offices and duties of Christianity unto several estates and conditions of persons, to men and women, to young and old; that so these might be good in all relations, and live religiously in every capacity.

Now in this concluding chapter of this epistle, he directs Titus to preach and press more general duties which concern all mankind, as, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to show meekness to all men, to be careful to maintain good works; because the false apostles, instead of pressing the necessity of a good life, did amuse the people with idle notions, foolish questions, and endless disputes. Accordingly St. Paul doth thus bespeak them:

PUT them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey

magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

Observe here, that in those early days of Christianity, great scandal was brought upon religion by the undutiful carriage of servants and subjects towards their masters and magistrates; and this upon a false notion of Christian liberty, advanced and propagated by the false apostles, judaizing teachers, and gnostic libertines; whereupon he requires Titus to put Christians in mind of their duty in that particular, and to inculcate it earnestly upon them, that the Christian religion might not be slandered upon this account. *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers*. Learn hence, that the duty of subjection to governors and government, and of obedience to magistrates and rulers, is of very great importance, and ought to be enforced and frequently inculcated upon the people by the ministers of God; because by nature all men desire liberty, and to cast off the yoke of God. Every one would rule and govern, although the duty of subjection be much the easier duty. 2. From St. Paul's pressing Titus to preach up the doctrine of obedience and subjection to governors and government, learn, That there is no such way and method to bring the world to live regularly under government, like planting the gospel among them, and making them subject to our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men*.

Calumny and evil-speaking has been a reigning vice in all ages, and a greater guilt is contracted by it than men apprehend; every man ought to be as just to his neighbour's reputation as his own: if what we report of another we know to be false, it is downright lying; if what we report of others we believe to be false, it is slander; if what evil we report of others be really true, and we know it to be so, yet it is defamation, and contrary to that charity and goodness which Christianity requires; for to divulge the faults of others, though they be really guilty of them, without necessity, is certainly a sin, and included in this apostolic prohibition: to think and speak evil of others, is not only a bad thing, but a sign of a bad man; and in many cases it is as great charity to conceal an evil we hear of our neighbour, as it is to relieve him in his distress. The next exhortation is, *to be no brawlers*: in the original, *no fighters*; that is, neither with tongue nor hand, but meek and gentle, pu-

ting up a double wrong, rather than revenge a single injury, using all meekness towards all men. Meekness pacifies wrath, and conquers animosity to a wonder, making him tame and gentle, who by opposition is furious and implacable: the hardest flint is sooner broken upon a pillow or cushion that gently yieldeth, than upon a bar of iron that furiously resisteth.

3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

Here we have a very weighty reason laid down by our apostle, why Christians should be found in the practice of the fore-mentioned virtues of equity and lenity, of patience and charity, of meekness and long-suffering, one towards another; namely, because before their conversion they themselves lived in the practice of the fore-mentioned vices, as well as others: *We ourselves also were foolish, disobedient, &c.*, that is, the servants of sin, and slaves to our lusts, suffering wrath to rest in our bosoms, till it boiled up to revenge: having formerly therefore been such ourselves, we ought to pity rather than spurn at those that are so still. No argument will more effectually incline and dispose us to pity the miscarriages of others, than the consideration, that we ourselves are prone unto, and have heretofore been guilty of, the same or the like provocations ourselves.

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared. 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

As if our apostle had said, though in our heathenish and unconverted state we were as bad and vile as any, yet no sooner did the loving-kindness of God to fallen man appear, by the illumination of the gospel, and the communication of his grace, not for any good works or deserts of ours, but of his mere mercy and free goodness, he saved us from that state of sin and misery by regeneration, signified and sealed in baptism, and by renewing of the Holy Ghost, which Holy Spirit was poured forth in an extraordinary measure upon us (according to promise) after Christ's re-

surrection. Here observe, How every person in the Trinity acts distinctly in the work of our salvation; 1. The fount cause, the spring and source of our happiness, lies in the kindness and love of God the Father. 2. The meritorious and procuring cause of the application of this love, is Jesus Christ, in the work of redemption and mediation. 3. The immediate and efficient cause of the communication of that love of God the Father, procured through the mediation of Christ the Son, is the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration.

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 That, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

That is, which Holy Spirit was in its gifts and graces plentifully poured forth upon us, and dwelleth in us, not essentially, but energetically, illuminating, guiding, strengthening, and confirming of us: and the end of God herein is, *That being justified by his grace*, that is, by faith in his Son, *we should be made heirs of eternal life, according to the hope* which the promises of God have given us thereof. Learn hence, 1. That all the grace which is so plentifully poured forth upon believers, is by the means and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Learn, 2. That justification being a sinner's absolution from guilt and punishment by the satisfaction of Christ the Redeemer, is yet an act of special grace and free favour in God, *That being justified by his grace*. Learn, 3. That it is the blessed privilege of all justified persons, that they are now heirs to, and shall ere long be possessors of, eternal life; they shall ere long have in hand, what they now possess in hope: *Being justified by grace, we are heirs according to the hope of eternal life*.

8 This is a faithful saying; and these things I will that thou affirm constantly; That they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

Our apostle having in the foregoing verses spoken of justification by grace without works of righteousness, doth here immediately give a strict and solemn charge to Titus, to press the necessity of good works upon those who did believe and embrace the gospel, on purpose to prevent all mistake and abuse of the doctrine of justification by faith, and free

grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ; intimating, that they who are justified by the faith of the gospel, should be so far from thinking themselves hereby excused from good works, that they ought upon that account to be the more careful to maintain and practise them; because, by the very profession of the Christian faith and religion, they have solemnly engaged themselves so to do. Observe here, 1. That the great design of Christianity, and the end of God in the revelation of the gospel, was to reform the lives and manners of men, and to oblige all persons both to be good and to do good. Learn, 2. From the apostle's vehement asseveration, *This is a faithful saying*, and his solemn charge, *These things I will that thou affirm constantly*, that there have been persons in all ages, who have exalted the virtue of faith, if not intentionally, yet indiscreetly, to the prejudice and neglect of a good life. As if by a mere speculative belief and profession of Christianity, men were discharged from the practice of moral duties. God grant that the decr'd morality of some persons may be an integral part of my religion. Learn, 3. That though good works are not necessary before justification to bring us into a justified state, yet they are necessary after justification, in order to our continuance in that state; *Not by works of righteousness which we have done*, that is, before faith; but he doth not exclude the works of righteousness in the least, that they should hereafter do by virtue of the new nature given to them, from being conditions of their future happiness. As morality doth not make faith useless, so neither doth faith bring any excuse for immorality. Learn, 4. That it is not sufficient that believers do good works, but they must *maintain* good works: the words signify they must be patterns and precedents, they must be eminent and excelling in good works: and let their faith be never so excellent, if they do not add to their faith virtue, it is but fancy, a strong faith built upon a weak foundation.

9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

We have the same charge given to Timothy, 1 *Epist.* i. 4. See the Note upon it. And learn hence, That disputes about matters which only serve to beget strife and contention, and tend little to our edification in faith and holiness, are vain talk and unprofitable disputes, to be declined and avoided by all wise and serious Chris-

tians. *Avoid foolish questions, for they are unprofitable and vain.*

10 A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition reject; 11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

As if the apostle had said, Avoid and shun, and refuse communion with, him that doth obstinately persist in dangerous errors and heresies, and accordingly let him be excommunicated. Learn hence, 1. Who is an heretic in the apostle's sense; even he who is perverted from the true faith, and holds opinions which subvert the foundations of it; and one who is condemned in his own conscience, and sins against his own convictions: for the apostle here bids Titus not to inform him of his errors, but admonish him of his fault, which shows him that the crime lay not in his head, in his understanding, but in his will and affections: for no man who acts according to his judgment and conscience, how erroneous soever, is self-condemned in that action. Learn, 2. That even heretics themselves ought to be tenderly and lovingly dealt with, so long as there is any hope that they may be gained or won. Learn, 3. That the charity of the church, in her censure of excommunication, aims rather at the cutting off errors than of persons.

13 When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.

Our apostle having finished all such common precepts as respected the whole church in Crete, he now passeth to such private affairs as did more particularly respect the person of Titus and himself. First, he desires Titus to come to him to Nicopolis from Crete, but not before he had sent thither Artemas or Tychicus to officiate in his place. Wonderful care of the holy apostle! and a mighty concern for the welfare of the churches! St. Paul very well knew how fatal and dangerous it might be to the churches to be left destitute of their spiritual guides, though for a very small time. St. Paul knew the malice of the devil, the subtilty of seducers, and the weakness of Christians' faith, too well, to give all or any of them advantages of doing mischief in the absence of Titus from them.

13 Bring Zenas the lawyer, and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.

Here we have a second private affair which is given in charge to Titus, namely, that he help forward on their journey Zenas and Apollos, both apostolic men, the former an expounder of the law of Moses, the other an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures; both these cleaved to St. Paul, and therefore were worthy to be respected by Titus, whom the apostle therefore bids him be kind and courteous to, and help them forward with their journey. Learn thence, That Christianity is no enemy to, but a great promoter of, all offices of humanity and civil courtesy towards all persons, towards strangers particularly, towards good men especially. Observe next, St. Paul desires Titus to take care that those servants of God be so supplied, that they lack nothing; such as are engaged in the Lord's work must be carefully provided for, and care taken that they lack nothing.

14 And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.

Let ours, that is, either, 1. Those of our order, the ministers of the gospel, or those that are our converts, such as are Christians, let them study to excel in good works, be diligent in the labours of their calling, that they may have wherewith to supply the necessities of others, to the intent that they may not appear *unfruitful*. Learn hence, That as Christianity is no barren and fruitless profession, but all persons professing religion ought to take care that good works may accompany their faith; so the ministers of Christ in special ought to be careful herein, and by no means to

bind that duty upon others, which they do not practise themselves; they must by charity and good works second their doctrine, and so win persons to a love of religion.

15 All that are with me salute thee.—

By these words St. Paul gives Titus to understand, *that* all the Christians that were then with him did embrace him with an endearing and loving affection, and would have their mindfulness of him witnessed by a kind and familiar salutation. These salutations had more in them than humanity, civility, and common courtesy; they were attestations of a truly Christian love and brotherly affection of one member of Christ towards another, for grace's sake.

—Greet them that love us in the faith.—

That is, as Christians, as brethren, and fellow-members in Christ, *Verus Amicus qui vere & in Deo diligit*. Grace binds man to man in the strongest and most indissoluble bonds and ties.

—Grace be with you all. Amen.

This is the salutation of St. Paul, always written with his own hand, in all his epistles, although the epistles themselves were writ by others; he did it to prevent counterfeits, that no spurious writings might be obtruded upon the church: and whereas he says, *Grace be with you all*, it plainly intimates, that although this epistle be written by name to Titus, that yet it was intended for the benefit and advantage of the whole church.

THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO
PHILEMON.

This Epistle was writ to a particular person, and upon a particular occasion. This person was Philemon, an eminent officer in the church of Colosse; and, as some say, successor to Timothy, as bishop of Ephesus. The occasion this: Onesimus, a naughty servant, running away from his master Philemon, and carrying away probably something of his master's substance with him, by the providence of God comes to Rome, where St. Paul was then a prisoner and preacher in bonds; God blessed the apostle's ministry for the conversion of this fugitive, who was brought to a true knowledge of Jesus Christ, and after his conversion, for a time, administered to Paul in prison; but the apostle understanding that he was another man's servant, and particularly his dear friend Philemon's, sends him back to his master, earnestly desiring him to pardon him, and to receive him into favour.

PAUL, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon, our dearly-beloved, and fellow-labourer; 2 And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus, our fellow-soldier, and to the church in thy house: 3 Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. The writer of this epistle described by his name, *Paul*; by his condition, *a prisoner of Jesus Christ*; by his office, *a labourer, a soldier, a fellow-labourer and a fellow-soldier with Philemon and Archippus*. Where note, That to be a labourer, a soldier, and a prisoner for Jesus Christ, are the titles that St. Paul glories in, and not in worldly dignities. *Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ*; yet was Paul a prisoner in *libera custodia*, not so closely confined but he had pen, ink, and paper; God gave Paul then, as Joseph before, favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison; Let persecutors send the saints to prison, God can provide a keeper for their turn. Happy was it for thee, Onesimus, that Paul was sent to gaol; his imprisonment was the happy occasion of thy spiritual liberty. Observe, 2. The persons to whom the epistle is directed; first, and eminently, to Philemon the master, and to Apphia, the mistress of the family, in which and with whom Onesimus had

dwelt, but was now run from. St. Paul writes to both, judging the mistress's consent necessary for taking this fugitive back into her family, as well as the master's; intimating thereby, that although the husband by the ordinance and appointment of God has the highest place, the first and chief power in the government of the family, yet the wife being given him of God, as an assistant and fellow-helper in government, her subordinate authority given her by God is to be owned and acknowledged. Next, This epistle is directed to Archippus, who dwelt with or near Philemon: him he calls his fellow-soldier, and Philemon his fellow-labourer. Where note, That the ministers of the gospel are compared to soldiers; they have enemies to encounter and conflict with, Satan's temptations, the world's persecutions, sinners' corrupt lusts and affections. Let the ministers of God then reckon beforehand upon a toilsome and troublesome life; if they resolve to be faithful, the devil will plant all his artillery against them. Last of all, the epistle is directed to the church in Philemon's house, by which some understand the company of Christians that met together at his house to worship God; for Christians then had not liberty publicly to perform that duty: others understand it of Philemon's own family, which speaks at once Philemon's privilege and duty, that he had such a well-ordered family, that it was a little church; that is, it was a lively

image and representation of the church, both in its doctrine and worship.

4 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,

Observe here, Our apostle's holy insinuation and pious wisdom; that he might make a more easy way for his petition, he labours to possess Philemon with an opinion of his endeared affection towards him, and of his continual prayers even by name for him: *I thank my God, making mention of thee in my prayers.* Where note, That St. Paul did, and we may, make particular mention of persons and churches in our daily prayers to Almighty God: *I make mention of thee always in my prayers.*

5 Hearing of thy love and faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints: 6 That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. 7 For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

Our apostle having discovered to Philemon his fervent prayers for him, next makes mention of the excellent graces which were so orient and shining in him, namely, his faith and his love; his faith in Christ produced love to him and all his saints, not to a party of Christians only: *Hearing of thy love and faith towards the Lord Jesus, and in him towards all the saints.* The saints are to be loved next to Christ, and in and for Christ. Observe next, St. Paul prays that Philemon's faith and love might be made manifest to be effectual for producing all sorts of good fruits in him and by him: *That the communication of thy faith may become effectual.* Observe lastly, the great joy and consolation which the apostle had in the operativeness of Philemon's faith and love, whereby the bowels of the saints were greatly refreshed. Learn hence, That administering to the necessities of the saints, and relieving the bowels of the distressed members of Jesus Christ, is a blessed evidence of the sincerity of our love to Christ and Christians. There is a frozen charity and a lip-love found among many professors, whom Christ will disown at the great day; but such as by office of kindness, performed with a tender and pitiful heart, do refresh the bowels of the saints, Christ reckons it as done unto himself, whatever is done to those his suffering members, *Matt. xxv.* and God

himself is thereby refreshed, *Phil. iv. 18.* *An odour of sweet smell, and a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.* Note lastly, What the condition of the holiest and best of God's servants in the world has been, is, and may be; namely, such, that their bowels may stand in need of refreshing, whilst the wicked are fat, fresh, and flourishing; but blessed be God, if his children miss of refreshment from men, their time of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord.

8 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, 9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee; being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ. 10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: 11 Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:

Observe here, The marvellous condescending humility of our apostle in these expressions: As an apostle he was the highest ruler and officer in the church of God, and had the fullest authority and power that a person could have upon earth, to command, require, and enjoin Philemon to the practice of his duty; but he tells him, though he might be bold to enjoin, yet he rather chose to beseech: *For love's sake I rather beseech thee.* Learn hence, That church rulers and governors, although they have a commanding power and authority, which upon occasion they may and must make use of; yet they should choose much rather in love to entreat, hoping that will work more kindly and effectually upon the minds of persons. Observe, 2. The argument St. Paul uses as a ground of entreaty: *I Paul desire and beseech thee, I Paul the aged, I Paul a prisoner.* Note, he urges his years as an argument for granting his request; that he was aged, and an aged minister of Christ: if honour be due to an aged person walking in the ways of righteousness, much more is it so to an aged minister, gray-headed in the service of Christ, and having faithfully discharged his duty there. He also urges his sufferings as well as his years: *I Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ.* The sufferings of Christ's ministers in the cause of God should by no means lessen and diminish, but rather augment and increase, that reverence, regard, and respect, which is deservedly due and payable unto them. Observe, 3. The person whom he thus intercedes with affection

for: Onesimus, whom he calls his *son begotten in his bonds*; that is, his spiritual son, converted to Christianity by his ministry, when he was in prison. Where note, That endearing love, and that fervent affection, which the ministers of Christ bear to their converts, to such as they have gained unto Christ; it equals, nay, perhaps exceeds, the natural affections of parents towards their own children. Note also, Who they are that best deserve the name of *fathers* in the church; verily those who have begot most spiritual children unto God; such as can say, "Lord, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me." Nevertheless, for our comfort, God will, at the reckoning day, account and treat such as spiritual fathers who have been faithful, though unsuccessful in the work of Christ; because they have cast forth the prolific seed of the gospel, therefore the cause of sterility and spiritual barrenness cannot be imputed to them, they having exerted and put forth their best endeavours. Note also, The high honour which God confers upon his faithful ministers: the scripture allows them, though but instruments, what is properly attributed to God himself, namely, to beget spiritual children; this is God's work. *Of his own will begat he us*, James i. 18. God allows that to be in an inferior sense attributed to the ministry, which is strictly applicable only to himself. Observe, 4. How the apostle wisely answers the objections which Philemon might make against his request of receiving Onesimus, that he had been vile, a fugitive, a thief; what not? St. Paul implicitly owns all that, yet with a softening distinction, *He was unprofitable in times past, but now profiteth both thee and me*. Now St. Paul pre-occupating and answering this objection before Philemon made it, shows how hard it is for the best of men to forgive and forget injuries done unto them, especially by their relations, those in their own families, whether children or servants. Note also, The character given of Onesimus before conversion, *he was unprofitable*. Lord! what an useless, unprofitable creature, is an unsanctified and unconverted sinner! unprofitable to God, unprofitable to others, unprofitable to his own soul; but by conversion he becomes universally useful and profitable to all about him, but especially to himself; others may have the benefit of our estate, our parts and gifts, but we ourselves shall have the chief benefit, comfort, and advantage, of our own grace.

12 Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine

own bowels; 13 Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: 14 But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

Here are several arguments used by our apostle, why Philemon should receive Onesimus into his service again. 1. Because St. Paul had sent him for that end a long and tedious journey from Rome to Colosse, and because he came with the apostle's commendatory letters, and in his name. We are not easily to reject those that come to us countenanced and encouraged with the commendations of the reverend and faithful ministers of God. In the close of the first argument, at the foot of the twelfth verse, observe the endearing title he gives Onesimus, he calls him, *his own bowels*; *Receive him that is my own bowels*. O Lord! certainly there is no stronger love, nor more endearing and endeared affection, between any relations upon earth, than between the ministers of the gospel and such of their beloved people whom they have been happily instrumental to beget unto thyself! How inexpressibly dear is the soul of a poor servant to a faithful minister of Christ, and how lovely when once converted! *Receive him*, for he is as dear to me as if he had proceeded out of my own bowels. Again, another argument is this: St. Paul sends him, because he was another's servant, even Philemon his friend; and being very serviceable to the apostle, he would have gladly detained him; but could not satisfy himself to do it, without Philemon's consent. Masters have such a right to their servants, and such a right unto their service, that they are not to be disposed of without their own consent. St. Paul, though he wanted, yet would not detain Onesimus, though a fugitive servant, without Philemon's knowledge; Christian religion is no destroyer, but an establisher, of civil right. Onesimus's conversion to Christianity gave him no manumission and liberty from Philemon's service, and accordingly our apostle remits and sends him back to his old master Philemon.

15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever: 16 Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord?

Here our apostle answers an objection which possibly Philemon might make: Thus, "Onesimus ran away from me; what reason have I to receive him again?" The apostle seems thus to rely upon it: if his departing from thee was so managed by the wise and merciful providence of God, that it might be an occasion of thy receiving him again for ever, then, for all his departure thou oughtest to receive him. But verily thus it is, the wisdom of God has thus overruled the matter; he went from thee a fugitive, thievish and purloining; but he returns, a convert, a Christian, a brother in the faith, and as such to be entertained by thee, being doubly related to thee, both as a servant, and as a fellow-member of Christ. Observe here, 1. The large extent, and next the overruling power, of the Divine Providence: its extent, it reaches not only to kingdoms and nations, but to families and persons, even to poor bond-slaves; a fugitive runs not from his service, but the providence of God eyes and observes it, nay wisely and mercifully overrules it. Oh! the depth of divine knowledge and wisdom! the providence of God concerns itself, and has a hand in those actions of men which are sinful, without any blemish to his holiness; he concurs to the act but not to the alaxy and disorder of the action; he that rides a lame horse is the cause of his going, but not of his halting. Observe, 2. The privilege of our spiritual conjunction in Christ above any other civil conjunction: the former lasts *for ever*, and the latter but *for a short time*; the relation between husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, alas, it is but for a moment. Death will soon dissolve all civil relations; but the spiritual relation and conjunction being effected by the bond of the Spirit, is indissoluble, it is *for ever*. Death itself cannot dissolve it, yea, it knits the knot faster: *He departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him for ever*. Observe, 3. That although Christianity doth not take away the degrees of persons, and the civil differences between man and man, yet it maketh us all equal and fellow-brethren in Christ. *Receive him now, not barely as a servant, but above a servant, as a brother in Christ*; you and he are now brethren by grace. Learn hence, That religious servants are more than ordinary servants, they are brethren in Christ; and when humility, fidelity, and prudence are found with them, as they are more than ordinary servants, so God expects that we should give them more than ordinary respect; and we sin in denying it. O servants, would you have high respect showed to you? become then first humble servants

to Jesus Christ, and then faithful and prudent servants where God has placed you, and you shall never want respect either from God or men: *for them that honour God, he will honour.*

17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. 18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; 19 I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.

Observe here, 1. Another argument wherewith St. Paul doth press Philemon to receive Onesimus, and it is drawn from a partnership and communion with him in the faith; if we are partners, and have communion and friendship one with another as Christians, comply with my desires herein. Learn hence, that there is a communion, a fellowship, a partnership, between Christians; and this communion which is between saints, should make saints respect one another, *If thou count me a partner, receive him; yea, receive him as myself*; a very high expression, still discovering that affectionate tenderness which St. Paul bare to this new convert. Observe, 2. Another objection answered; Philemon might say, how can I receive him that has wronged me, robbed me, and run away from me? Sure it is enough to pardon him; must I receive him too? Our apostle implicitly grants, that there was a debt due from Onesimus to Philemon; *If he hath wronged*; that is granting that he has done it. Where note, Religion destroys no man's property, nor does communion of saints make a community of goods; otherwise from this community, Onesimus, or St. Paul for him, might have pleaded an immunity both from restitution and punishment; St. Paul acknowledges, not denies the debt; but observe farther, he takes it upon himself, *Put it on my account, I will repay it*. It is not then unlawful in itself, for one person to become bound and surety for another; yea, it is a work of mercy, which not only may be done, but sometimes must be done, but always with due caution and consideration. Observe, 3. The wonderful modesty of the apostle in mentioning his own praises and commendations, *I say not that thou owest to me even thine own self*; implying what great things he had done for Philemon in his conversion, so great as made Philemon a debtor, not only of his own goods, but of himself too: however, the apostle only glances at it modestly, and that upon a just and great occasion

too: *I do not say*, (though I might have said it) *that thou owest to me even thine own self besides*.

20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord. 21 Having confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say. 22 But withal prepare me also a lodging: For I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

Observe here, 1. A pathetic repetition of our apostle's former petition, with the force and strength of a fresh and additional argument. Thus, "O my brother, that which revives me in a prison, and refreshes my bowels, now I am in bonds, that assuredly thou oughtest to do; but thy remitting and receiving Onesimus will thus refresh me, therefore do it." Learn thence, That whatsoever Christians know will rejoice the hearts and revive the spirits, of one another, ought in mutual condescension and kindness to be performed each towards other upon their mutual requests. How unnatural it is for one member to vex and grieve another! as unbecoming is it in the body spiritual as it is in the body natural. *Brother let me have joy in the Lord, refresh my bowels in the Lord.* Observe, 2. Our apostle's holy confidence in Philemon's obedience and compliance; *Having confidence in thy obedience, I know thou wilt do more than I say.* See here what credit and honour conscience and obedience puts upon a man: Philemon's good conscience occasioned St. Paul's confidence: it is a special honour when the general course of a man's life is so steady, so uniform, and even, that either our ministers or pious friends dare to be confident in us, vouch for us, and engage for our obedience and compliance with whatever becomes us. Observe, 3. St. Paul having finished his request for Onesimus, speaks one word for himself, namely, that a lodging might be prepared for him; hoping, it seems, for a deliverance out of prison by the help of the church's prayers. *Prepare me a lodging.* Religion is no enemy to hospitality; nay, it requires it, and encourages it, *Rom. xii. 13. Heb. xiii. 2.* It is a duty incumbent upon all, but especially ministers: but an unkind world takes care that some have scarce bread sufficient for their families, much less have an ability for hospitality, or indeed for those necessary acts of charity which are required by God and expected by man, to render their labours amongst their people both acceptable and

successful. The ministers of God, when they ask bread of some, they give them a stone, and when they demand their dues of others, they sting like a scorpion; but, blessed be God, it is not thus universally. Note, lastly, what it was St. Paul grounded his expectation of deliverance upon, namely, the help and benefit of the church's prayers: *I trust through your prayers I shall be given unto you.* Learn that our deliverance from trouble is to be expected and sought by the means of the prayers of such as fear God; yet mark, Though prayer obtains much, yet it merits nothing at God's hand. *I trust through your prayers I shall be given*, that is, freely given unto you; though we obtain blessings by prayer, yet not for the merit of our prayers. If mercy were due to us, thankfulness were not due to God.

23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus; 24 Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-labourers. 25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Our apostle being now come to the conclusion of his epistle, he shuts it up with salutations and prayers: first he salutes Philemon from Epaphras, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, some his fellow-prisoners, all his fellow labourers. Here note, How graciously God provides for the comfort of his children in a prison; he sweetened St. Paul's affliction with the saint's communion: it was no joy to St. Paul that Epaphras was in prison; he had rather he had been preaching at Colosse; but seeing he was a prisoner, the apostle, no doubt, was very thankful that he was in the same prison with him, where they had opportunity (it is hoped) to pray together, to discourse, encourage, and comfort one another. And note the cause of Epaphras's imprisonment, *in Christ Jesus*, that is for the sake of Christ Jesus. No doubt there were others in prison besides Epaphras, but none were St. Paul's fellow-prisoners but he, because though sufferers in the same prison, yet not for the same cause; *Epaphras my fellow-prisoner saluteth thee.* Observe, 2. Our apostle's concluding prayer, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.* Here note, 1. The person prayed to, the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, our anointed king; from Christ we are called Christians, because every one of us, in our measures, are partakers of a divine unction with and from him, 1 John ii. 20. *Ye have an unction from the Holy One.* This oil ran down from the head of our great

High-priest, to the very skirts of his garment. Note 2. The blessing prayed for, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit*; that is, "May the special favour of God, both in its effects and influences, in its graces and comforts, reside in thy soul and spirit; may the blessed spirit of our Lord Jesus evermore dwell in thee by his sanctifying impressions, by his powerful assistances, and by his quickening influences. Note, 3. He doth not pray for Philemon solely, though for him eminently, but for all the saints at Colosse, who had obtained like precious faith with him. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, not *thy* but *your* spirit: all the saints

of God in general, yea, the whole race of mankind universally, must be remembered by us in our prayers. *Amen*, is a word that denotes our earnestness of desire to be heard, and our comfortable expectation of being answered: it teaches us, that whatever we pray for should be rightly understood, firmly expected, and earnestly desired. They sin in prayer, who either do not understand what they pray for, or do not earnestly desire what they pray for, or do not believe God's readiness to grant what they pray for; therefore in testimony of our desire and assurance to be heard in prayer, we say *Amen*.

LAUS DEO.

THE EPISTLE

TO THE

HEBREWS.

As touching the author and penman of this Epistle to the Hebrews, there have been many and various opinions: some have supposed it written by St. Luke, others by Barnabas, or Clemens, but most by St. Paul, which they attempt to prove from chap. xiii. 23. "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty;" because it is customary with St. Paul, when he writes epistles, to call Timothy his brother, 2 Cor. i. 1. Coloss. i. 1. And also from the words of St. Peter, 2 Pet. iii. 15. "As our dear brother Paul hath written unto you in all his epistles." Whence it is evident, that the apostle Paul had writ to them, to whom St. Peter was then writing; that is, to the believing Jews in general, and to those of the dispersion in particular. But since we are assured that the Spirit of God did indite the book, we need not be over-solicitous to find out whose hand it was that held the pen.

The persons to whom this Epistle is directed, are styled Hebrews; that is, the believing Jews converted to Christianity, chiefly those that inhabited Judea, and in and about Jerusalem: who though they had embraced the gospel, yet they adhered to the Mosaic rites and Jewish ceremonies, joining them with Christianity, as necessary to salvation. Now for this bare profession of Christianity, they were exposed to a bitter persecution by the unbelieving Jews. Our apostle therefore, justly fearing lest their sufferings for Christianity should occasion their apostasy from it, writes this Epistle to establish and confirm them in their holy profession, by acquainting them with the sad and fatal consequences of a ruinous apostasy, and the fruitlessness of former sufferings, without a resolute perseverance in the Christian faith, and patience under all tribulations.

That St. Paul did not prefix his name to this Epistle, as he did to others, the reason supposed is this, because he was the apostle of the Gentiles, and not of the circumcision, or of the Jews; and his name not being over-acceptable to them, he sets it not at the front of this Epistle, lest the sight of it should have prejudiced the Jews, and taken them off from duly weighing and considering the weighty matters which he wrote about.

The general scope and design of this Epistle is, to inform the Hebrews, that the gospel ministry, or dispensation, under the New Testament by Jesus Christ, far surpasseth, and transcendantly excelleth, the ministry of the Old Testament under Moses and the prophets; and to prove, that Christ was greater than the angels, a greater person and lawgiver than Moses, a greater priest than Aaron, a greater prince than Melchizedek; and that the Levitical priesthood, and Old Covenant, were to give place to Christ our great High-priest, and to the New Covenant established upon better promises.

CHAP. I.

In the first chapter of this epistle, the proofs of the eternal deity of Jesus Christ are produced with such clear evidence of scripture light, that only a veiled heart, or obstinate infidelity, can resist. And the medium which the inspired penman makes use of is, the comparing Christ with the angels, (the glory and beauty of the creation,) and showing that he is infinitely dignified above them: and that religious adoration is due unto him from them, even from the angels of the highest order, ver. 6. "Let all the angels of God worship him." But this will most evidently appear by a particular explication of the several parts and verses of this chapter, in which our apostle thus speaks:

GOD, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son,—

Our apostle intending here a comparison between the law and the gospel, shows first

wherein they both agree, and next wherein they differ. They agree (first) in this, That God was the author of them both: both law and gospel received their original from God himself; and God the Father, by way of eminency, was the peculiar author both of law and gospel. God, that God who spake in times past by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. Observe, 2. The difference between the law and gospel, with respect to the manner of their revelation. The revelation of the will of God under the law, was, 1. At sundry times: before the flood, by Enoch and Noah; after the flood, by Abraham, by Jacob, by Moses, and all the prophets. 2. In divers manners; sometimes by a lively voice, sometimes by dreams and visions, sometimes by inspiration and immediate revelations, sometimes by Urim and Thummim, sometimes by signs from heaven. 3. The revelation of

the law was made of old, formerly, *in times past*; this of the gospel was made *in these last days*. 4. That was made to the *fathers*, this to *us*. 5. That revelation was made by the *prophets*, this by the *Son*, Jesus Christ. From the whole learn, 1. That Almighty God did not leave the world only to the light of nature, and to know him barely by his works of creation; but bestowed upon them the invaluable blessing of supernatural revelation, thereby to bring mankind to the clearer knowledge of their duty. Learn, 2. That the revelation which God was pleased to make of himself, his mind and will, was gradual, and by part, not all at one time, and in one manner, but at *sun-dry times*, and in *divers manners*. Learn, 3. That the gospel dispensation is the most perfect revelation of the will of God, which God ever did or ever will make to the sons of men. Learn, 4. That as it is a perfect, so likewise a final revelation of God's mind and will to a lost world: a farther discovery of the mind of God for man's salvation is not to be expected: the gospel is the last effort which the divine mercy and goodness will make upon mankind, in order to eternal happiness; herein God has spoken to us by his Son: and if we will not hear him, he will speak no more, we must expect no other; he can send no greater prophet, no dearer person, to us than his own Son; and as he can send no greater, so will he send no other: for if we despise him, whom will we reverence? Now the dignity of this person our apostle proceeds in this and the next verse to describe.

—Whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

The title of *heir*, which is here given to Christ, setteth out his dignity and dominion, together with the right he has to both; namely, that of the Sonship; for what is an heir but his father's successor? Christ, as a Son, being heir of all things, imports that he is Lord of all, and has a sovereign empire and dominion over all persons and things, over all angels and men, whether living or dead. Learn hence, That God the Father has given and granted unto Christ his Son, as mediator and head of his church, a sovereign power and authority over all persons and things, both in heaven and in earth, to be disposed of by him at his pleasure, and according to the sovereign purpose of his will: *Whom he hath appointed heir of all things*.

—By whom also he made the worlds;

By whom, not for whom, as the Socinians

would suggest; the word signifies the efficient, not the final cause, according to *Coloss. i. 16, 17. By him were all things created, and by him all things consist. And by him not as an instrument or created cause, for then must he be created by himself, seeing all things were made by him, and nothing made without him, John i. 3. But as the principal efficient cause, according to St. John v. 19. Whatsoever the Father doeth, that doeth also the Son likewise. The Father doth all by the Son, and the Son doth all from the Father. And by making the worlds, we are to understand his forming of the old world, not his reforming of the new; for if so, the apostles might be said to make the worlds, as well as Christ, because they had a principal hand in converting and reforming the world. But by the worlds here, understand the visible and material worlds, all things in heaven and earth, which were made by Christ, not as a subordinate instrument, but as a primary and principal agent; which sets forth the omnipotent power of Christ, and consequently proves him to be truly and really God. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ, by making the world, and all things therein, by his own immediate power, has given a full and ample demonstration of his divinity, or being essentially and really God.*

3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Our apostle here proceeds in describing the divinity of Christ's person, by whom the Father has made known his will to us under the gospel. He declares, 1. What he is. 2. What he does, or did. 3. The consequent of both, or what he now enjoyeth. Observe, 1. Our apostle declares who and what Christ was and is, namely, *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*. As the brightness of the sun is of the same nature with the sun, and of as long continuance as the sun, and cannot be separated from the sun; and yet the sun, and the brightness of the sun, are really distinct each from other. In like manner the Father and the Son are of one and the same essence, co-eternal and inseparable, yet the person of the one is distinct from the other. And as the sun communicates its light and influence to us by its beams, so doth God communicate his goodness, and manifest himself to us by Jesus Christ. Learn hence, That the Son

is of the same essence with the Father, yet a person really distinct from the Father, and all the incomprehensible glory of the Father brightly shines forth in Christ his Son.

—And the express image of his person,—

That is, the express character of God the Father's person, his natural image, and essential likeness; all the perfections shining forth in God the Father, are substantially in Christ the Son: is the Father eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent? so is the Son, whose character he is, whose resemblance and image he bears: John x. 38. *The Father is in me, and I in him*; the same essential properties and nature being in each person, by virtue thereof their persons are said to be in each other. All the glorious perfections of the nature of God do belong unto, and dwell in the person of, the Son of God. Observe, 2. Our apostle having declared what Christ is, next declares what he does: namely, that he *upholdeth all things by the word of his power*; that is, he exerts and puts forth the same omnipotent power in the work of preservation, which he did in the work of creation, keeping it from sinking into its original chaos of confusion. This work of conservation, say some, is a greater act of omnipotency than that of creation; by the former, all things were brought out of nothing, by the latter, they are preserved from returning into nothing, which their own nature, and their perpetual conflict by contrariety of qualities, would necessarily precipitate them into. Learn hence, 1. That such is the nature and condition of the universe, that it cannot subsist one moment without continual support; such is the dependent condition of the whole creation. Learn, 2. That our Lord Jesus Christ has the weight of the whole creation upon his hand, he upholdeth what himself created; and as well his upholding as creating, his conservation as well as creation of all things by the word of his power, do prove him truly and really God. Observe, 3. A further evidence and proof of the divinity of Christ, produced here by our apostle: as he made the world by his omnipotent power, and upholds it by his wonderful providence, so he redeemed it by his blood, *He by himself purged our sins*. He that made the heavens, bowed the heavens, and came down from heaven, and became a sacrifice for sin on earth, and by himself alone, by himself without a partner, by himself without a comforter, expiated the guilt of sin, and satisfied the justice of God for sin, suffering as he was

man, and satisfying as he was God: *Who by himself purged our sins*. Learn hence, That so great was the work of expiation of sin, that it could no otherwise be really effected and accomplished, than by the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ, who was truly and really God. Observe, 4. The consequent of all that Christ did, or his glorious condition after his humiliation: having *purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*; that is, God the Father clothed him with the highest honour, and endowed him with the greatest power, that heaven itself could afford: the right hand is the place both of dignity and honour, and also of superiority and power; Christ's sitting at God's right hand imports his exaltation to the highest authority and most supreme dominion. Learn hence, That when our Lord Jesus Christ had finished his sufferings upon earth, he was placed in the seat of the highest honour and authority, at the right hand of God his Father, in heaven, even to be the object and adoration both to angels and men, as the following verses declare, in which our apostle thus speaks:

4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. 5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? 6 And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

In the foregoing verses, a comparison was made between Christ and the prophets, here between Christ and the angels, and the preference and pre-eminency is given to him above them all. Angels were very glorious creatures, employed by God in giving the law; but Christ, whom God the Father employed in the dispensation of the gospel, is far superior to them, and has an excellency above them. 1. *A more excellent name*, they being called ministers or servants, he styled a Son. 2. A more excellent nature, his being a divine, theirs an angelical nature; yea, his human nature by virtue of his union with the God-head, has a dignity surpassing the nature of angels. 3. A more excellent office and function, as Mediator between God and man, which belongs not to any angels. And, 4. Consequently a more excellent power and authority, with a right to adoration and worship, which the angels have

not, but are commanded to worship him. *When he brought his first-begotten into the world, that is, in the morning of the resurrection, when he was in a glorious manner begotten from the dead, the Father says, Let all the angels of God worship him; and therefore he that is to be worshipped is greater than they that are to worship him. Learn hence; 1. That the evidencing and declaring of Christ to be the Son of God, was the particular care and special work of God the Father; he said it, he recorded it, he revealed it; Thou art my Son. Learn, 2. That the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, is in his own person God blessed for ever, to whom divine honour and religious worship is due and payable from glorified angels: Let all the angels of God worship him. Learn, 3. That the command of God is the ground and reason of all religious worship; the angels are to worship Christ, but the ground of their doing it is God's command; He saith, Let all the angels of God worship him. Learn, 4. That it can be no part of our duty to worship the angels, who are our fellow-servants in the worship of Jesus Christ; they that are to worship Christ with us, surely are not to be worshipped by us.*

7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. 8 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: 9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Still our apostle goes on, comparing Christ and the angels together, and giving a transcendent preference to the one before the other. The angels are ministering servants, but Christ a Son; the angels are the prime instruments of the Father's providence, most zealous and active to accomplish his pleasure, but the Son is God: *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* God, not by analogy and deputation, as princes are, not with a limitation and diminution, as Moses was made a god to Pharaoh, but absolutely and really, as subsisting in the divine nature; to the Son he saith, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* Learn hence, That it is the divine nature of Jesus Christ that gives stability and fixedness, yea, immutability and unchangeableness, to his throne and kingdom: *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* And whereas the

sceptres of earthly kings are often unrighteously managed, and their thrones do ruinously fall, the sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Christ's kingdom; that is, all the laws, and the whole administration of his kingdom by his word and Spirit, are all just and equal, righteous and holy: *A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.* And farther, the apostle declares, that the righteous administration of Christ in his kingdom, proceeds from his own habitual righteousness and love thereunto: *Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and for that reason was dignified and exalted by God over and above all his fellows.* Learn hence, That Jesus Christ is Mediator, because of his love to righteousness, and hatred to sin, is dignified and advanced by God, not only above all men, but likewise above all angels. *Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee above thy fellows.*

10 And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: 11 They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; 12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

What proof more can be desired of Christ's divinity, than what is here given by our apostle? The name and attributes of God are given to him, as also an everlasting throne and kingdom; divine honour is required to be paid to him; and here such divine works are ascribed to him, wherein no creature can have any share of efficiency with him; such is the making of the world, *Thou, Lord, laidst the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands:* here we have Christ's omnipotency declared, *Thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are thy handy works:* and his eternity and immutability asserted, *When the heavens perish, thou remainest; when they wax old and are changed, thou art the same.* Learn hence, That the whole world, the heavens and the earth, being made by our Lord Jesus Christ, is an evident proof that he is exalted above all creatures, and that he is an almighty and unchangeable God: *Thou, Lord, hast laid, &c.* Learn, 2. That such is the frailty of man's nature, and such is the perishing condition of all created things, that nothing will or can yield stable consolation to us, but a firm belief of the omnipotency and immutability of our Lord Jesus Christ.

13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

This verse contains a farther proof of Christ's pre-eminence above the angels, and that he is in reality the Son of God; namely, because he sits in the quality of a Son, at the right hand of God the Father; equal to him in dignity, power, and glory, commanding all the visible and invisible world, most easily, yet irresistibly; though gradually, subduing his enemies to a consummate and complete victory. *To which of the angels said he at any time?* The words are an interrogation, which have the force of a vehement negation: and imply that God the Father did never say this to any of the angels, nor put such honour upon any of them, as to say, Sit on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool; but to Christ he said it, Psal. cx. 1. *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.* Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ is a spiritual King; and as such has many enemies to his kingdom and government. Sin is an enemy to Christ and his kingdom; and makes an universal opposition to Christ and his government; Satan is a sworn enemy to Christ and his throne, and he exerts his enmity by temptations and persecutions. The world is an enemy also in the things of it, in the men of it, in the rule of it. The law is an enemy to Christ and his kingdom, not absolutely, but accidentally, by reason of the consequences that attend it. It slays them, Rom. vii. 9, 10, 11, which is the work of an enemy. In a word, death, the grave, and hell, are Christ's enemies. Learn, 2. That all Christ's enemies shall, in Christ's time, be made his footstool; they are conquering now initially and gradually, they shall be conquered ere long finally and perfectly; and all his people shall be made complete sharers in his victory and conquest. Learn, 3. That Christ's sitting at God's right hand, in a certain and assured expectation of having his foes become his footstool, is an undoubted proof of the divinity of his person, and that he is essentially and really God. To none of the angels, or any of the creatures, said he, at any time, Sit on my right hand; but to the Son he said, *Sit on my right hand, &c.*

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

This is that last testimony produced by

the apostle to prove Christ's pre-eminence above the angels. He is a Son, they are but servants; not only servants to Christ, but servants to believers, to the church of Christ, to the heirs of salvation. Observe here, 1. The nature of angels declared: they are spirits, without any thing material or corporeal belonging to them, yet having a power to assume a body, and appear in human shape, when they please. The scripture describes them as excelling in strength, purity, and holiness, to be of great activity and swiftness, and gives intimation of several ranks and orders among them, distinguishing them by the names of principalities and powers, thrones and dominions; but what the difference of these names do import, none can positively declare. Observe, 2. Their general office declared: they are *ministering spirits*, they are God's domestic servants, they attend upon his throne, they expect his commands, they execute his pleasure, and are in a constant readiness to do his will. The angels are the great instruments of Providence in the world; not that God needs them, or cannot manage without them; for he can do whatever he pleaseth in heaven and earth. God can steer all human affairs with the least nod and beck of his will, without any instruments at all; but his wisdom and goodness thinks fit to honour his creatures with his commands, that so they may be capable of his favour and rewards. Observe, 3. The special office and employment of good angels, with reference to good men; they are sent forth, there is their designation and appointment; to *minister*, that is their general end and employment; *for the heirs of salvation*, that is their special and peculiar business; they have a charge of the bodies and souls of the saints whilst alive; a special charge of their souls at death, to conduct them to blessedness, and probably a care and charge of their bodies after death, as may be gathered from St. Jude, ver. 9. Learn hence, 1. That the highest honour of the most glorious angels in heaven, is to minister to the saints by God's appointment here on earth. Learn, 2. That such is the love and care of God towards his saints, that he sends the most glorious attendants upon his own throne, to minister unto them, and to take care of them. Behold then the astonishing regard which the great God has for good men, in that he appoints all his angels to minister to them, for the safeguard of their persons, for the success of their affairs, and for the security of their eternal salvation. Lord! what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him; that when thou madest him lower

than the angels, thou shouldest yet make the angels minister unto him! Behold also the impiety of the church of Rome, in worshipping of angels! Surely, if they are our fellow-servants, and minister unto us, we are by no means to worship them. See *Rev. xix. 10.*

CHAP. II.

Our apostle having, by an irresistible strength and force of argument, proved his proposition laid down in the foregoing chapter, namely, That Christ, the dispenser of the gospel, was not only above Moses, the deliverer of the law, but far superior to the angels themselves; he comes, in the beginning of this chapter, to draw an inference from his foregoing discourse, as appears by the illative particle, therefore, at the head of the first verse, which runs thus:

THEREFORE we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip.

As if our apostle had said, Seeing Christ is so excellent in his person, and seeing the gospel has such a glorious author as the blessed Jesus, let us take great heed that we esteem his person, revere his authority, reverence his ministry, and message, and that our memories be not like leaking vessels, suffering the word at any time to slip and run from us. Learn hence, 1. That the consideration of the revelation of the gospel of the Son of God, is a powerful motive to an high estimation of it, and a diligent attendance on it. *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed*; that is, knowing the excellency of his person, and the sublimity of his doctrine. Learn, 2. That the true and only way of honouring our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, is by diligent attendance and obedience to his word: where there is no obedience to the gospel, there is no faith in, nor love unto, Jesus Christ, the author and dispenser of the gospel. Learn, 3. That there are sundry times and seasons wherein, and several ways and means whereby, men are in great danger of losing the word, if they attend not diligently to its preservation. *Lest at any time*; some lose the word in a time of prosperity, others in a time of persecution, some in a time of temptation. Learn, 4. That the word heard is not lost without great sin, as well as with the inevitable ruin of the souls of men. If we suffer the word to slip out of our memories, that we forget it; out of our hearts, that we despise it; out of our lives, that we are disobedient to it; it is lost as to us, and will end in our loss, yea, in our ruin at the last. Learn, 5. That the only way to prevent this sin and danger, under

the word, is by a very diligent attendance upon it, and giving more earnest heed to the things contained in it: we are to attend to the word before we hear, to bring us to it; to attend upon it in hearing, that it may be remembered by us; and after we have heard it, that it may be practised by us. This consideration, that it is the word of Christ, the great and mighty God, the wisdom of the Father, that we are going forth to hear, will engage us to give the more earnest heed to the things we hear, *lest at any time we should let them slip.*

2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; 3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation;

The apostle having set forth the transcendent dignity of Christ's person and office, and shown that he was a more excellent prophet than Moses, a more excellent priest than Aaron, a more excellent king than Melchizedek, hereupon he infers, that such as despise the gospel, the doctrine of this blessed Jesus, are far more inexcusable than those that were the transgressors of the law of Moses. *If the word spoken by angels were steadfast*; that is, if the law given by the ministry of angels was firm and inviolable, and all the transgressors of it were justly and severely punished; how can we escape perishing, if we neglect the gospel, which makes a discovery of that great salvation which was purchased by Christ for lost sinners! The apostle's argument is drawn (*a minori ad majus*) from the less to the greater. Thus, if Almighty God was so severe against the violation of a far meaner institution, to wit, the law given by the ministry and dispensation of angels; how can we escape that neglect to hear and obey the gospel, which makes a tender, yea, the only tender, of salvation to a lost world! Note here, 1. The great care which God Almighty takes to make lost sinners happy, namely, by offering them a great salvation. Note, 2. The great care which every one of us ought to take in order to our own happiness and salvation, and that is, not to neglect it. Note, 3. The great guilt which they contract, and the inevitable punishment God will inflict on such as do neglect this great salvation, *How shall they escape?* Learn hence, 1. That there is salvation held forth and tendered by Christ to lost sinners, in the gospel. That this salvation thus held forth and tendered unto sinners, is a great salvation; great in its

author, Christ Jesus; *great* in the price paid for it, the blood of Jesus; *great* in the subject recipient of it, the whole man, soul and body; *great* in regard of the evils it saves us from, sin, Satan, the curse of the law, death and hell; *great* in respect of the gracious privileges it interests believers in. Learn, 2. That notwithstanding this salvation is so great, yet there are some that neglect it. Learn, 3. That it is impossible for such neglecters to escape. *Quest.*

1. What shall they not escape? *Ans.* The curse of the law, the wrath of God, the sentence of Christ denounced and the sentence of Christ inflicted. *Quest.* 2. Why shall they not escape? *Ans.* Because such persons sin against the remedy, the only remedy, which the wisdom of God hath found out for man's recovery; and accordingly the mouth of God hath spoken it, the hand of God hath written it, and the oath of God hath confirmed it, that such sinners shall not escape: such as sin against the remedy, must perish without the remedy.

—Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, *and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him*; 4 God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

Here we have a special reason assigned, why such as reject the gospel cannot escape divine wrath, because the gospel was first published and delivered by Jesus Christ; it was clearly, plainly, sweetly, and persuasively, preached by himself first. The law was promulgated by angels, the gospel proclaimed by the Son of God, and afterwards by his apostles; and God confirmed their testimony by *signs and wonders*, by miraculous powers, and *gifts of the Holy Ghost*: all which did signify God's approbation of their doctrine, and gave the world a confirmation of the truth and excellency of it, and consequently gave credibility to it. Here note, That as the law of Moses was confirmed by miracles, so was the gospel of Jesus also; nay, herein this was superior to that. Moses wrought signs and wonders, but the gifts of the Holy Ghost were peculiar to the times of the Messiah, and were the proper confirmation of the gospel dispensation. Yet, note farther, That though the apostles had a power to work miracles, yet it was *according to God's will*, and not at their own pleasure; they could not work miracles when they pleased, nor what they pleased:

whence it was evident, that not they but God was the worker of them. And the more God's overruling will was seen in the miracles *then*, the greater confirmation have we of that doctrine *now*: which (gospel) *was at first spoken by the Lord; and was confirmed unto us by divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.*

5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. 6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? 7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands;

Still our apostle prosecutes his former design, which was to persuade the Hebrews, that more heed is to be given to the word or law delivered by angels, because God had given a greater authority to Christ than ever he did to the angels; as appears by putting the world to come in subjection to Christ, and not to angels: yea, inasmuch as angels themselves are to be in subjection unto Christ, as a part of his kingdom. *Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come*; that is, the world of believers, gathered out of all nations by the preaching of the gospel, is put under Christ's immediate power, and subject not to angels, but to Christ himself. Learn hence, That it is the great privilege of the gospel-church that it depends upon Christ as its immediate and only head, and is not put in subjection to any other, either angels or men. The gospel-church was not put in subjection to angels in its first erection or institution, nor was it put in subjection unto angels, as to the rule and government of it when erected; but angels and saints are equally subjected unto Christ, who is both an head of vital influence, as also an head of authority, rule, and government to the whole church, and every member thereof. Observe next, The proof which the apostle brings for this out of the Psalms, *Psa. viii.* in which David breaks forth into admiration and wonder, at that glory and honour which God the Father put upon man at first in the work of creation, and next, in the work of redemption: when the Son of God took the nature of man upon him, well might it then be said, *Lord! what is man that thou wert thus mindful of him, and the sons of men, that thy dear and only Son did thus visit*

them! Learn hence, 1. That such was the inconceivable love of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, towards the sons of men, that he was free and willing to condescend unto any condition for their benefit and salvation: he that was the creator of angels was willing, for our sakes, to be made lower than the angels, a *little lower*, that is, for a little time lower than the angels, namely, during the time of his humiliation. Learn, 2. That this wonderful condescension of Christ to take the nature of man, his respect and care, his love and grace towards mankind, is just matter of great and eternal admiration. O! what is man that thou art mindful of him, and crownest him with dignity and glory!

8 'Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour;—

We had an account of the depth of our Lord's humiliation before, of the height of his exaltation now, all things are and shall be put under him; for though God has given Christ dominion over all things, and all things are subject to his power, yet he hath not as yet exercised his complete power in ruining all his enemies, and reducing all his people to subjection: and this will not be seen until the last *saint* be converted, and until death, the last enemy, be destroyed. But yet, in the mean time, Christ is exalted with great triumph to his kingdom in heaven, and there crowned with dignity, honour, and glory in heaven. It is easy to believe, that every thing shall be put under him that riseth up against him, in his own appointed time.

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Observe here, 1. The wonderful humiliation and abasement, the exinanition and deep depression, of the glorious Jesus: he was made for a little time *lower than the angels*; that is, he was made man, and mortal, and did suffer death. Observe, 2. The manner of our Lord's death: *he tasted it*, he did really taste of it, and but taste of it; he tasted death, that is, he died really, and not in appearance only, he tasted it

implying that he underwent the bitterness of it: he found out experimentally what death was by dying, as a man finds out the bitterness of a thing by tasting. Again, he did but taste of it, he was not finally overcome and vanquished by it; he continued but a short time under it, it was not possible that he should be long holden of it; the dignity of his person rendered a short continuance of him under the power of death sufficient for our redemption. Observe, 3. The persons for whom he tasted death, or died: for others, not for himself; that is, for their room and stead; he underwent that death in our stead, which we should have undergone in our own persons. Observe, 4. The extent of Christ's death; he tasted death for *every man*; that is, Christ by his death has made God propitious to every man, made sin remissible, and every man saveable; the death of Christ renders God willing to be reconciled unto all sinners; faith renders him actually reconciled. The reason why every man doth not obtain salvation, is not for want of a sufficient propitiation. Observe, 5. The moving cause which inclined God to deliver up Christ to death, and to transfer our punishment upon him, and that was his own grace and free goodwill, *that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man*. Observe, 6. The glorious reward of our Lord's sufferings with reference to himself, *We see Jesus, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour*. As Christ's meritorious sufferings for us, so shall our patient suffering for him, be rewarded with the highest glory in heaven, 1 Pet. v. 10. *The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, &c.*

10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Observe here, 1. The gracious title given to Christ, *The Captain of our salvation*; because the whole work of salvation, from first to last, our guidance and conduct through sin and suffering unto glory and happiness, is committed to him. As a captain he conducts with care, he leads on with power, he discharges his trust with tenderness and love; he goes before us in obedience, in suffering through death, and into glory. Observe, 2. That God made Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, perfect through suffering; that is, he was consecrated and set apart for the office of

a complete priest by his own blood, when he offered himself without spot to God. Every Levitical priest was consecrated by the blood of a beast sacrificed; Christ was consecrated by his own blood, for no other blood would be accepted. It is called the Father's act to consecrate and make him perfect; but indeed it was the Son's own immediate act; the Father's by designation and appointment, but his own by actual performance, offering himself through the eternal Spirit without spot. Observe, 3. That Christ being consecrated and perfected through sufferings, hath consecrated the way of suffering, for all that follow him to pass through it into glory. Upon this consecration of the way of suffering by Christ Jesus, a believer's suffering becomes, 1. Necessary and unavoidable; the head and the members must be made conformable to each other, *Rom. viii. 29*. They are thereby made, 2. Useful and profitable: Christ has taken the curse of the cross, and sanctified the cross to a special end and purpose. Hereby likewise all sufferings for the gospel are, 3. made honourable; no greater honour than to suffer for Christ, *Acts v. 41*. *The apostles rejoiced that they had the honour to suffer shame for his name*. And, lastly, Sufferings hereby are made safe to the sons of God, yea, more safe than prosperity by far. Gold is not consumed, but improved and preserved, in the furnace. Observe, 4. That such is the merit and desert of sin, and such the immutability and severity of the justice of God, that there was no way possible to bring sinners unto glory, but by the death and sufferings of the Son of God; or if possible, yet no other way so becoming God: *It became him for whom are all things*. And so expressive of his love and goodness to a lost world, it would have been unbefitting God, the supreme governor of the world, to have passed by the desert of sin, without a satisfaction; therefore his wisdom contrived that grace should be exercised, and justice satisfied; that sin should be punished, and mercy magnified; that sinners should be saved, and the glory of God's attributes secured.

11 For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, *are all of one*; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren; 12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. 13 And again I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

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In these words the union of Christ and us, by his participation of the same nature with us, is declared: he and we *are all of one*; that is, one and the same nature, of one stock and original; it was the product of the wise, merciful, and righteous counsel of God, that the Saviour of men should have communion with them in their nature, that he might have right to redeem them by his propinquity, and alliance with them: *Both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one*. Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ was, and ought to be, of the same nature and stock with those whom he did redeem, and sanctify unto God. Divine justice required, that the same nature which had sinned should suffer for sin. The wisdom of God was pleased to redeem man: man must be redeemed by man: God as God could not die, therefore God becomes man, that he might be in a capacity to die; he that as man will redeem man, must be of the same nature with man. This Christ was, both by divine institution, and by a voluntary susception: *He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one*. Learn, 2. That Christ having taken our nature upon him, accounts it no disgrace to acknowledge and own us for his brethren: Christ will be ashamed of none of his brethren, but such as are a shame unto him. Learn, 3. That notwithstanding the union of nature which is betwixt Christ and us, yet in respect of our persons there is an inconceivable distance between him and us: so that it is a marvellous condescension in him to call us brethren. Here note, That though Christ called us brethren, yet it becomes us to call him Lord; and as such to adore and worship him, to glorify and serve him, to honour and obey him.

14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same: that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.

Observe here, 1. The reality of Christ's assuming the human nature asserted: *As the children are partakers of flesh and blood he also himself likewise took part of the same*. Which is in effect the same he had asserted in the foregoing verse, that *he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one*, that is, of one nature and original. Observe, 2. A twofold reason assigned, why Christ thus condescendingly assumed the

human nature, namely, that he might destroy the devil, who has the power of death, and deliver his people that were under the slavish fear of death. Here note, 1. The devil described in a very formidable manner, as one that had *the power of death*; not the supreme, but a subordinate, power of death; a power of death, as God's executioner to inflict it: the devil has the power of death, just as the hangman has the power of the gallows, to put those to death whom the judge condemns only. Note, 2. Him that has thus the power of death, has Christ destroyed, that is disarmed and disabled; not destroyed his being, but disarmed him of his power and authority over the children of God. Note, 3. That Christ did this by his own death: through death; that is, by his own dying, he destroyed him that had the power of death: it was upon the cross that he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly; Christ by dying conquered death. The second reason of Christ's appearing in our flesh and nature, was to deliver his people from the slavery and bondage of the sinful and servile fears of death. Here note, 1. That there is a natural fear of death, which is not sinful. Art thou afraid of death? Thou wert not a man if thou didst not fear it: there cannot but be in nature an aversion to its own dissolution; and nature will always act like itself. Note, 2. That there is a servile, slavish fear of death, which hath both sin and torment in it; a fear of death as penal, and drawing after it everlasting punishment. Note, 3. That unregenerate men, if a senseless stupidity had not benumbed them, and a spirit of slumber fallen upon them, are in bondage under the servile and slavish fear of death. It will daunt the stoutest man that ever lived to look upon death, when he can see nothing but hell beyond it. Note, 4. That Jesus Christ, by dying, has freed all his children from this servile and tormenting fear of death. 1. Christ has taken away the true reason of the fear of death, namely, the curse and condemnation of the law of God. *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law*: death has its wounding power from sin, and sin has its condemning power from the law. 2. Christ has assured believers that they shall not be losers, but gainers, yea, great gainers, by death; considering the private evils freed from, and the positive good they shall rest in.

16 For verily he took not on *him* the nature of angels: but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham.

• It may be rendered from the original

thus: *He caught not hold on angels, but on man he caught hold.* A metaphor taken from a person that catches hold of another who is falling down some deep and dangerous precipice, to his inevitable destruction: such a good and kind office did the Son of God for us, when he suffered angels to fall headlong from that state of happiness in which they were created, into that abyss and gulf of misery into which they had plunged themselves by their voluntary transgression: the like unto which man also had done, had he not been seasonably caught by the Son of God in the arms of preventing grace and mercy. Learn, That it was not the angelical, but the human nature; it was the nature of fallen man, and not of lapsed angels, which the Son of God did vouchsafe to assume, and to take into a personal union with his Godhead. *Quest.* Why would not Christ take upon him the nature of angels? 1. Probably because they were the first transgressors, and God might judge it decent that the first breach of the divine law should be punished with death, to secure obedience for the future: Or, 2. Because the angels sinned without a tempter, they had no superior rank of creatures already fallen, as man had, to seduce and draw them from their obedience to their Creator's will; Or, 3. Because the angels sinned against more clear and convictive light and knowledge: there was nothing of weakness, deceit, or ignorance, to lessen the malignity of their sin; they did not sin by mispersuasion, but of purposed malice. But, after all, the reason why Christ took not hold on angels, but on man, the seed of Abraham, must be ultimately resolved into the sovereignty of God's will, who will be merciful to whom he will be merciful. Lord! why mercy, thy milder attribute, should be exercised towards man, and justice, thy severer attribute, be executed upon angels; why vessels of clay be chosen, and vessels of gold rejected, must be resolved into that love which passeth knowledge; and we shall never fully understand the riches of this discriminating grace, until thy dear Son shall appear at the great day, as their judge and our justifier. Then shall we feel the comfort of these words, That *Christ took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham.*

17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconcilia

tion for the sins of the people; 18 For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

In these two verses our apostle illustrates what he had taught before, and confirms his foregoing proposition concerning Christ's participating of flesh and blood, and acquaints us here with one special end of it, namely, to be such an High-priest as our exigencies and necessities did require: for we being persons obnoxious to temptations and sufferings of all sorts, the wisdom of God, and the nature of the thing, required it, that Christ, our great High-priest, should in a special manner be able to relieve and help us: in order to this, Observe, 1. How our apostle reports and re-asserts, that Christ was in *all things*, or every manner of way, *made like unto his brethren*: that is, he assumed the human nature, with all its essential properties, subjected to temptations and sufferings, but not to sin, for that would have been so far from conducing to the end aimed at, that it would have been utterly destructive of it. Had he been himself a sinner, he could never have satisfied the justice of God for our sins. Observe, 2. The general end of Christ's conformity to his brethren: namely, That he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest. That he might be our priest, it was necessary that he should partake of our nature; for every high-priest for men must be taken from among men; this is not work for an angel, nor for God himself as such: and that he might be our *merciful and faithful* high-priest, he was subject to *sufferings and temptations*. With great condolency and tender sympathy doth he exercise acts of mercy and compassion towards the human nature; and thus was he merciful, and with great condescension and care doth he take notice of all the concerns of his brethren under wants and sorrows, under all their temptations and sufferings: and thus is he our faithful as well as merciful High-priest. Learn hence, That such was the unspeakable love of Christ towards his brethren, that he would refuse no condition of life, neither sufferings nor temptations, to fit him for the discharge of his office, which he had undertaken for them. Christ suffered, and was tempted, that he might succour them that are tempted: he suffered under all his temptations, but sinned in none; he suffered, being tempted, but sinned not being tempted. Observe, 3. The special design and end of Christ's being our great High-priest: namely, *To make reconciliation for the sins of the people*. From whence learn,

That the principal work of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our great High-priest, and from which all other actings of his in that office do flow, was to make reconciliation or atonement for sin; his intercession in heaven is founded on earth. The Socinians, therefore, who deny the satisfaction of Christ, and his dying, as a propitiation or propitiatory sacrifice for sin, take from us our hopes and happiness; from Christ his office and honour; from God, his grace and glory; they do indeed allow of a reconciliation in words, but it is of men to God, and not of God to men. They plead the expediency of our being reconciled to God by faith and obedience, but deny the necessity of God's being reconciled to us by sacrifice, satisfaction, and atonement; so resolved are these men to be as little as may be beholden to Jesus Christ, that rather than grant that he has made any reconciliation for us by his blood, they deny that there was any need of such a reconciliation at all, never considering the inflexibility of God's justice, nor the impartiality of his indignation against sin. Oh! the depths of Satan! and, oh! the stupidity and blindness of those men that are taken captive by him at his pleasure!

CHAP. III.

Our apostle having in the foregoing chapters asserted the doctrine of our Saviour's priesthood, according to his constant method, he comes in this chapter to make application of that doctrine which he had declared and confirmed, that seeing Christ was so highly dignified and exalted, being the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, we should diligently consider him, both what he is in himself, and what he is to us; this teaches us, that all the doctrines of the gospel, especially those concerning the person and offices of Jesus Christ, ought to be improved by us unto practice and obedience.

WHEREFORE, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

These words are an exhortation to the believing Hebrews, to *consider* and ponder in their hearts the high dignity and excellency of Christ, as the great prophet and apostle of his church; and in them, Observe, 1. The title given to the Hebrews, unto whom the exhortation is directed; he styles them, 1. *Holy brethren*, so they were all by external profession, and many of them, no doubt, by internal sanctification. Learn hence, That all the professors of the gospel are obliged to be holy, and such as are real professors of it, are sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and made truly and really holy. 2. *Partakers of the heavenly calling*; that is, of that calling from heaven which makes you heirs of heaven.

implying, that the only way to attain the saving knowledge of Christ in the gospel, is by means of an effectual heavenly calling. Observe, 2. The duty exhorted to, and that is, diligent consideration. *Consider Christ Jesus*; that is, rationally attend unto, and with great intension of mind ponder upon, the undertaking of the Son of God: for if you consider him in his person and offices, you will firmly adhere to him and his most holy and excellent religion, without entanglements unto Judaism. Learn thence, That the spiritual and deep mysteries of the gospel, especially those which concern the person and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ, do require our deep and diligent, our most attentive and serious consideration. Observe, 3. The title given to Jesus Christ, the object of this consideration: he is styled the *Apostle and High-priest of our profession*; that is, the first and chief apostle sent of God to be the prime preacher of the gospel, the first legate sent from heaven, and the great High-priest that mediates between God and man. Here note, That the function of an apostle and high-priest were the greatest functions that ever God instituted in his church; none greater than an high-priest under the law, none greater than an apostle under the gospel, both of them never conjoined in one man but here. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ is all in all unto his church, the king, priest, prophet, and apostle of it, all in one: *Consider the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, &c.*

2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also *Moses was faithful* in all his house.

Because the Jews had generally too high an opinion of Moses, our apostle here enters upon a comparison between Christ and Moses, thus, "As Moses was faithful, so was Christ in declaring the will, the whole will, of God unto his church. Was Moses universally faithful, faithful in all his house; so did the faithfulness of Christ extend itself to all the church. Did Moses do every thing according to the institution and appointment of God; so was Christ faithful to him that appointed him, doing all that in and for the church which God had commanded him, and nothing else." Learn hence, That the worship of God in his household and family, the church, is, for the substance of it, no less perfectly and completely ordered and ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ, now under the gospel, than it was by Moses of old under the law; I say, as to the substance of it, not as to every particular circumstance. As,

for example, the manner of celebrating the passover in every minute circumstance of it is set down by Moses, how it must be killed, and how eaten; but Christ has not set down so for the sacrament: a general command we have to do this in remembrance of him; but neither the time when, nor place where, nor gesture in which, is particularly and expressly mentioned. The gospel, which teaches us a more spiritual way of serving God, is not so particular in the circumstantial of worship as the law was; and yet *Christ was faithful to him that appointed him, as Moses was faithful in all his house.*

3 For this *man* was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. 4 For every house is builded by some *man*, but he that built all things is God. 5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; 6 But Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Our apostle having, in the preceding verses, entered upon a comparison between Christ and Moses, and showed in general wherein they were alike and did agree; he proceeds now to evince the preference of Christ, and to show in sundry signal instances his exaltation above Moses; *This man*, meaning the Messiah, *was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, &c.* As if he had said, "Christ is as much more honourable than Moses, as the maker and master of the house is more honourable than the house: he that buildeth the house hath more honour than the house; but Christ built the house, and Moses was only of the house, or a part of it; therefore Christ ought to have more honour than Moses: for all families or houses are founded by some man; but he that built the church, is the same that made all things, namely, God." Another proposition proving the same conclusion, we have in the next verses: thus, "He that is a son over his own house, is of more honour than a servant in the house of another. But Christ is a son over his own house; Moses was only a servant in the house of another; therefore more honour is due to Christ than is payable to Moses." Learn hence, 1. That the church is God's house, a building of God, a sacred building, his special

temple, the place of his constant and fixed residence. Learn, 2. That the building of the church is so great and glorious a work, as that it could not be effected by any but him who was truly and really God: such is the wisdom of its contrivance, that none but God could build it, and such omnipotent power was required in the building of it, that we may admire its excellency, but cannot comprehend it. Learn, 3. That Christ, the builder of this church, the house of God, is worthy of all glory and honour, upon the account of that his building: he had indeed an essential glory from all eternity, the same with that of God the Father, which was clouded for a season by his taking upon himself the form of a servant: but there is a farther honour and glory, which he received in his exaltation as head of the church, and as Lord and heir of the whole creation, which renders him the object of religious adoration. Learn, 4. That although every one that is employed as an instrument in building the house of God, and is faithful in his work and trust, is with Moses worthy of great honour; yet the honour of all such instruments put together, is inferior and subordinate to the glory and honour of Jesus Christ, the chief builder of the church.

—Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

The apostle having thus confirmed his argument, returns (according to his usual manner) to make application of it unto the Hebrews, and improves it for enforcement of his exhortation unto constancy and perseverance. *Whose house are we:* that is, believers who worship him according to the gospel are so, upon this condition, *that we hold fast our confidence;* that is, the confident profession of our Christian faith, and the joy and glorying in our hopes of the promised blessedness, unto the end. Learn hence, That as it is an eminent privilege to be of the house of Christ, or a part of that house, so the greatness of the privilege requires an answerable duty: because we are the house of God, it becomes us to hold fast our confidence unto the end. Learn, 2. That as at all times, so especially in a time of trial and persecution, constancy in our Christian profession is, and will be a good evidence, both to ourselves and others, that we are living stones in the house of God: *His house are we, if we hold fast our confidence unto the end.*

7 Wherefore, (as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, 8 Harden not your hearts, as

in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; 9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. 10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, 'They do always err in their heart: and they have not known my ways. 11 So I swear in my wrath, 'They shall not enter into my rest.)

The apostle having proved our Lord Jesus Christ to be the great prophet and teacher of his church, doth in these words draw an inference from the foregoing conclusion, namely, That seeing Christ is the chief apostle and prophet of his church, seeing he was a teacher sent of God to instruct the world in the practice of their reasonable duty, that therefore it is our obliged duty to hearken to Christ's voice, and now to comply with his call, and that presently. *Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* Observe here, 1. The person spoken of, and that is Christ; *His voice,* that is, the voice of Christ our great apostle, speaking in his gospel. Observe, 2. A duty required of us in reference to his person, and that is, to hear and obey Christ's voice. Observe, 3. The circumstance of time, and the special season, when this duty of hearing Christ's voice is to be performed, and that is presently; *To-day if ye will hear his voice.* Observe, 4. A cautionary direction given to all those that sit under the dispensation of the gospel, and hear Christ's voice speaking to them therein, namely, *To take heed that they harden not their hearts.* Learn hence, 1. That the voice which speaks unto us in and by the gospel, is Christ's voice. Learn, 2. That it is the great duty of all those that sit under the preaching of the gospel, to hear and obey Christ's voice. Learn, 3. That it is not only their duty to hear Christ's voice, and answer his call in the gospel, but to do it now, to do it presently, and without delay: *To-day if ye will hear his voice.* Learn, 4. That it is the duty, and ought to be the special care, of all those that sit under the dispensation of the gospel, and that hear Christ's voice speaking to them therein, to take heed that they harden not their hearts. Observe, lastly, From our apostle's drawing an instance out of the Old Testament, namely, that of the Jews in the wilderness, to instruct the Hebrews to make use of their present season for hearing the voice of Christ under the New Testament: We learn, That Old-Testament examples are New-Testament instructions. The examples of our forefathers.

thers are of use and concernment to us, and ought to be objects of our deepest consideration: *Your fathers tempted me, and I was grieved with that generation.*

12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

The apostle having propounded the example of the Israelites in the foregoing verses, to the consideration of the Hebrews, here he advises them to take care that they do not imitate the old Israelites in their unbelief, which will endanger our revolt from God now, as it did theirs then: *Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.* Where note, the nature of sin in general, and of unbelief in particular, declared: it is a departure from God, from the living God; the root of all apostasy is cursed infidelity; unbelief sets all the corrupt lusts and affections of the heart at liberty, to act according to their own perverse nature and inclination; for it makes the soul negligent, careless, and slothful in opposing sin. Note farther, That there is need of great care and heedfulness, of circumspection and watchfulness, lest at any time, or by any means, there should be found in us an evil heart of unbelief, to occasion our backsliding from Christ, and the profession of our faith in him: *Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, &c.*

13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

These words afford us a special remedy against the fore-mentioned evil of apostasy, and that is, mutual exhortation to constancy of religion: *Exhort one another*, ministers the people, and the people their ministers, and themselves mutually. Learn hence, That sedulous and mutual exhortation is a special means to preserve Christians from the sin and danger of apostasy from Christ and his holy religion: *Exhort one another daily.* Observe next, How this duty is amplified by the properties of it, it must be frequent: *Exhort one another daily*; and seasonably, *whilst it is called To-day.* We have but an uncertain season for the due performance of most certain duties; how long it will be called To-day we know not; the day of life is uncertain, and so is the day of the gospel; a summer's day for clearness, a winter's day for shortness; our working day is a wasting day. Observe, lastly, the great peril and danger

which attend the neglecters, and neglecting of this duty, *Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* Learn hence, That sin is very full of deceit, or exceedingly deceitful. 2. That the deceit which is in sin, and inseparable from it, tends exceedingly to the hardening of the sinner. There are three eminent evils in sin: pollution, by which it defiles; baseness, by which it dishonours; deceitfulness, by which it deludes us with a false expectation of what it is never able to perform.

14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;

That is, Hereby we shall declare ourselves to be made partakers of Christ and his saving benefits, if we persevere in the faith of the gospel, of which we have begun to make a profession; intimating, That such Christians as do renounce the profession of Christianity, either through fear or flattery, were never made partakers of Christ, nor savingly united to him: no better evidence of our interest in Christ, than what perseverance gives.

15 While it is said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. 16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

The intention of our apostle, in these and the following verses, is to confirm his preceding exhortation, to hearken unto the voice of Christ, speaking in and by the gospel; and this he does by propounding the example of the Israelites, who came forth out of Egypt under the conduct of Moses, and heard the voice of God in the wilderness: they all came out of Egypt under the conduct of Moses, and heard the voice of God in the wilderness; howbeit all did not provoke, but only some. Note here, 1. How the apostle again repeateth over the words of the Psalmist, which he had mentioned before, v. 7, 8. *To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* From whence we may learn, that the repetition, yea, frequent repetition, of matters of moment, is very useful and necessary: we can never hear that too often, which we can never learn too well. Note farther, The privilege which the Israelites of old enjoyed in the wilderness, and which we now enjoy under the gospel; both theirs and ours is this, *To hear the voice of God.* This is a very great privilege, but privileges are as men use them; in themselves

they are very valuable, but unto us they are no more than as they are prized and improved by us. Many, yea, most of them to whom Christ himself preached, finally perished; they got nothing by hearing his doctrine, through their unbelief, but an aggravation of their sins, and hastening of their ruin. Christ himself, in his whole ministry, was a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel. Let not his ministers then be discouraged at the smallness of their own success, knowing that they shall be a sweet savour unto God, as well in them that perish, as in them that are saved. Note, lastly, That although many, very many, in the wilderness that heard the voice of God provoked him, yet not all, ver. 16. *some when they heard, did provoke, howbeit not all that came out of Egypt.* Learn hence, That in the most general and visible apostasy of the church, God evermore reserves a remnant to himself to bear witness for himself by their faith and obedience: *They provoked, howbeit not all.* God always has, and ever will reserve, a remnant of faithful and undefiled souls unto himself, to maintain and keep up his own kingdom in the world, and to have a revenue of special glory from them, and by them, so long as the world continues.

17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Observe here, The party grieved, *God*; the parties grieving, *the people of Israel*; the time of both, *forty years*; the occasion of this grief, sin in general, unbelief in particular, hardness of heart, and final apostasy; the punishment of sin, *their carcasses fell in the wilderness.* Learn, 1. That sin is the proper object of God's displeasure, the only thing he is displeased with for itself, and with the sinner for sin's sake. Learn, 2. That public sins, or the sins of societies, are great, very great, provocations unto God. It was not for their personal and private sins that God was thus provoked, but for their confederacy in sinning. Learn, 3. From their exemplary punishment, *their carcasses fell in the wilderness*—That God sometimes makes men, who have been wickedly exemplary in sin, to be righteously exemplary in punishment.

18 And to whom sware he that

they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

The rest here spoken of is the land of Canaan, so called because God promised it to Abraham, to plant and settle his posterity in it; and because it typified heaven, that eternal rest which God has prepared for his saints: into this rest the rebellious and unbelieving Israelites must not enter; God sware the contrary, he sware by himself, he sware in his wrath, he sware to make his sentence irrevocable and immutable. Lord! thine oath stands as a bar against all unbelieving sinners at this day, as it did against the Israelites of old, and cuts off all hopes of future entrance into thy eternal rest which they have eternally forfeited! *To whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?* Learn hence, 1. That unbelief is the immediate root and cause of all provoking sins. Did men believe the happiness of heaven, they could not neglect it; did they believe the torments of hell, they would avoid them. Learn, 2. That the oath of God is engaged against all unbelief, and no unbeliever shall enter into the rest of God, ver. 19. *We see they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

CHAP. IV.

This chapter is of the same nature, and carrieth on the same design, with the foregoing; both of them contain an exhortation to faith, obedience, and perseverance. And inasmuch as the earthly Canaan was a type and figure of the heavenly rest, the apostle exhorteth all Christians to take heed, lest by unbelief they miss of the latter, as the Israelites did of old.

LET us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

As if the apostle had said, "Seeing you have so dreadful an example of God's wrath executed upon your fathers in the wilderness for their unbelief, take heed of their sins, lest ye suffer the like punishment." Here note, 1. The manner of the exhortation, and how the apostle includes himself in the admonition, *Let us fear*: it is wise and safe for the ministers of God to include themselves in the exhortations and admonitions which they give to others: for they need excitement, and the means of establishment, as well as others. Note, 2. The affection of fear which our apostle recommends for their preservation from falling; by which he means a fear of care, diligence, and circumspection. Let us fear lest we come short and fail. Fear is a good monitor, and the best preservative

from sin. Note, 3. The duty exhorted to, lest a promise of rest being made, we should fall short of attaining it, as the Israelites did that fell in the wilderness. Learn hence, 1. That it is matter of great and tremendous consequence to have the promises of God propounded to us; they are either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death; one of these two will certainly be the consequent of their proposal. God will demand a strict account of the sons of men, of the entertainment given to his promises and threatenings. Learn, 2. That they which mix not the promises of God with faith, shall utterly come short of entering into God's rest. Learn, 3. That the failing of men through unbelief, doth no way cause the promises of God to fail or cease; the veracity of God is engaged for the stability of the promise; so that though men by their unbelief may disappoint themselves of their expectation, yet they cannot bereave God of his faithfulness.

2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Observe here, 1. That the gospel is no new doctrine, no new law, but one and the same to all persons, and at all times, ever since the first publication of it in the original promise, *Gen. iii. 15*. It is the same for substance, though not for clearness of revelation; the same gospel was preached to Adam, to Abraham, to the Israelites in the wilderness, which was preached by Christ and his apostles, but with clearer light, evidence, and power in the administration of it; *Unto us was the gospel, the same gospel, preached, as well as unto them*. Observe, 2. That the generality of persons, who have sat under the preaching of the gospel in all ages, have not savingly profited by it, *The word preached did not profit*: from the beginning it has been so, partly through carelessness, and want of due attention in the hearers, and partly for want of meditation upon, and particular application of, the word unto themselves after they have heard it; partly through the neglect of prayer for a blessing upon the word they hear; for those and the like causes the word preached did not nor does not profit. Observe, 3. That unbelief in man's heart is the great cause of that unprofitableness which is found in the word preached: unbelief hinders the efficacy of the word preached, by withholding men from yielding their assent to the truths

they hear, by hindering them from applying, from a particular and close applying, of the word they hear to their own consciences; and unbelief hinders men from calling upon God by prayer, for a blessing upon the word they hear. Observe, 4. That the word preached then profits, and only then, when it is a mixed word: the original word is a metaphor taken either from seed, from meat, or from physic. As seed must be mixed with the soil, and with the dew and rain of heaven, or it will never spring and grow; or as meat must be mixed with the stomach, or it will not nourish; and as physic must meet and mix with the humour, gripe and put the patient to some pain, or it will never cure: so must the word be rooted in the heart, or it will never fructify in the life: it must be mixed with faith, with love, with humility, with patience, or it will never bring forth fruit with joy.

3 For we which have believed do enter into rest; as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, If they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

As if the apostle had said, There is a rest promised to us believers, as well as the typical rest, Canaan, was promised to the Israelites. Learn thence, That the state of believers, under the gospel, is a state of blessed rest. There is a spiritual rest which believers obtain entrance into by Jesus Christ, in the faith and worship of the gospel, besides their eternal rest in heaven. This spiritual rest consists in peace with God, in satisfaction and acquiescence to God, and in means of communion with God. Learn, 2. That it is faith alone which is the only way and means of entering into this blessed state of rest: *We who have believed do enter into rest*; as unbelief cuts off from, so faith gives an entrance into, the rest of God. It follows,

—As I have sworn in my wrath, If they shall enter into my rest:

Observe, Here is a threatening confirmed by the oath of God, that they who believe not should never enter into his rest, and a promise that such as do believe shall certainly enter. Learn thence, That there is a mutual in-being of promises and threatenings in the covenant, which must be considered together, and cannot be separated each from other. Where there is a promise expressed, there a threatening is tacitly understood; and where there is a threatening expressed, be it never so severe,

yet there is a gracious promise included: nay, sometimes God gives out a threatening for no other end, but that men may lay hold upon the promise. Thus the threatening, that Nineveh should perish, was given out mercifully, that Nineveh might not be destroyed. It follows,

—Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

That is, Almighty God, when he had perfected and finished the work of creation in six days, rested on the seventh day from his labour; showing us by his own example, that work and labour must precede our rest: after God had finished the glorious work of creation, he returns as it were into his own eternal rest, and directs to seek rest in himself; and by his own example teaches us, that our days of labour must go before our day of rest.

4 For he spoke in a certain place of the seventh *day* on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. 5 And in this *place* again, If they shall enter into my rest. 6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief. 7 Again, he limiteth a day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time: as it is said, 'To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.' 8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day.

For the clearer understanding of these words, we must know, that there is a three-fold rest spoken of in scripture, all which are called *His*, that is, God's rest, being all of his appointing and providing: namely, 1. The rest of the sabbath day, in remembrance of God's resting from the work of creation. 2. The typical rest in the land of Canaan. 3. An eternal rest with God in heaven, of which the sabbath and the Israelites' rest in Canaan were a type and figure. Now the apostle's design is, to prove that the rest which God principally intends for his people is this last rest, namely, an everlasting rest with himself in heaven; and this he evidently proves, because if that rest which they had obtained in the land of Canaan, under the conduct of Joshua, called (in Syriac) Jesus, had been all the rest which Almighty God ever intended for them, then it had been needless for David in the xcv. psalm, which

was penned a long time after, even some hundreds of years, to make mention of any other rest. But this he does, and therefore infers, that there is a third rest yet to come, which by the preaching of the gospel was now proposed to them, and that under the same promises and threatenings with the former. If Jesus, or Joshua, had given them the true spiritual and eternal rest here spoken of, in Canaan, then would not David afterward have spoken of another rest after their rest in Canaan; which seeing he has done, the apostle concludes, there must yet remain a farther rest to be enjoyed by the people of God. From the whole note, That God has by promise given his people a full assurance of enjoying a rest upon condition of faith, and this another manner of rest than that of Canaan, which the Israelites of old did enjoy.

9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

From the foregoing premises the apostle draws this conclusion, That there remaineth yet a more glorious, perfect, and complete rest, for the people of God. Observe here, 1. Something implied, namely, That the people of God, whilst here upon earth, have works to do, and labour incumbent upon them. Rest and labour are correlates, the one supposes the other; the apostle affirming, that there is rest remaining for them, strongly supposes that there is labour at present belonging to them; God's people are an industrious, working people: Christ's present call is to service and duty. Observe, 2. That God has already given his people a foretaste of, and some entrance into, rest, during this present state of work and labour; the better to enable them for that, and the more to sweeten that to them. The state of sin is a state of all labour, and no rest; the state of glory is all rest, and no labour; but the state of grace is a mixed state, partly of labour, and partly of rest; of labour in respect of ourselves, in respect of the world, against sin, under affliction and persecution; but of rest in Christ, in his love, in his favour, and grace; and thus our labour makes our rest sweet, and our rest makes our labour easy. Observe, 3. That there is reserved and laid up in heaven for all the people of God that serve him laboriously and faithfully here on earth, a sure and certain, a complete and perfect, a glorious and everlasting, rest; for its quantity it is full of rest; for its quality it is unmixed rest; rest, and nothing but rest: for its duration, it is an eternal rest; the least fear of losing or leaving it, would imbitter all the joy which

the saints taste in the fruition and enjoyment of it: *There remaineth*, or there is laid up and reserved, *a rest for the people of God.*

10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.

Into the spiritual heavenly rest, mentioned in the foregoing verse, the believer is said to have entered, in this verse; and this is done two ways, initially, inchoatively, and imperfectly in this life; fully, finally, perfectly, and completely in the next. They have now a present title and right to enter into this rest; the actual enjoyment and full possession of it is to come. Observe, 1. Believers have already entered initially into this rest whilst here on earth, and accordingly *have ceased from their own works*; that is, the works of the flesh, the service of sin; these they have discarded by repentance and mortification. Here note, That before conversion a person is doing his own works, fulfilling his own will, and not God's; but after he ceases from all sinful works, inchoatively, though not perfectly: *He that hath entered into his rest, hath ceased from his own works.* Observe, 2. That when believers have finished all their works of evangelical obedience, they shall then, and not till then, fully and finally enter into God's rest, and be for ever happy in the enjoyment of it. All men desire rest, but it is not to be found on earth, but in heaven; not in the creature, but in God. O happy they, which believing the excellency and glory of this rest, do work, wait, and wish for it, and with diligence and constancy use all holy endeavours for the attaining and securing of it.

11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

As if the apostle had said, "Seeing there is such an eternal glorious rest prepared for and promised to believers, then it is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour, of every one of us to secure our title to it, and our interest in it, by a steadfast faith and persevering obedience, lest following the example of our forefathers in the wilderness, we fall and perish as they did." Learn hence, 1. That there is a rest promised to us under the gospel, as there was to the Jews of old under the dispensation of the law. Learn, 2. That the Jews heretofore, by sin in general, by unbelief and disobedience in particular, did fall short of the rest proposed to them, and never entered into it, but were destroyed by the just in-

dignation of God. Learn, 3. That in the Israelites' sin, and God's displeasure, in the event of the one and in the effects of the other, there was an example set forth, of what would be our own lot and portion, if through unbelief we fall short of the rest which the gospel proposes to us: *Let us labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.* It is our duty to improve examples, lest we be made examples of divine displeasure. Learn, 4. That we cannot rationally have the least expectation of escaping vengeance under the guilt of those sins which others in like manner being guilty of, have not escaped, for with God, there is no respect of persons. Did the Israelites miss of the earthly Canaan? so shall we of the heavenly, through unbelief.

12 For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

As if the apostle had said, "Take heed especially of unbelief; for the word of God or doctrine of the Gospel, will quickly find you out, if you be guilty of it." There is a piercing power in the word of God, through the energy and efficacious operation of the Holy Spirit: it is here compared to a sword, because it does divide things most nearly united, and discover things most inward and secret, or rather God by the word does this: He by the word pierces, *even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit*, that is the actings of the understanding, and the motions of the will and affections; it cuts asunder the most resolute and compacted purposes of the will, yea it pierces to the marrow, that is, the most secret and close contrivances of the soul, the thoughts and intents of the heart. O mighty power of the word! and of God, in and by the word, to convey strength to the weak, wisdom to the simple, comfort to the sorrowful, light to the blind, and life to the dead! it brings souls out of the captivity of sin into the blest liberty of faith in Christ.

13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

There is not any one place of scripture, I think, which more fully informs us of the perfect and exact knowledge of Almighty

God, as to all persons and things, than this before us. Observe, 1. The object: all and every thing, our persons, our actions, the manner of our actions, the design and end of our actions; he knows what we have been and done, and what we will be and do. Observe, 2. The full manifestation and clear representation of all persons and things unto God. 1. All things are here said to be *naked*, unclothed, their dress and paint taken off; these words are an allusion to bodies, which being stripped and unclothed, all see why they are: there may be many deformities, blemishes, yea, ulcers, upon a body undiscerned, while it is clothed and covered; but when *naked*, every scar appears, and nothing is hid. *All things are naked in his sight*; that is, he as plainly discerns what they are, as we discern what a body is that stands naked before us. The knowledge which God has of persons and things is a clear and distinct knowledge. 2. All things are here said to be *open* as well as *naked*, unto God; a metaphor taken, says St. Chrysostom, from the sacrificed beasts, which, being exoriated, their skins plucked off, they were cut down from the neck to the rump, so that all the inwards of the beast lay bare, and every part might be clearly seen; it is one thing to see a sheep alive; with its skin and fleece on, and another thing, to see it naked, and flayed, but a farther thing to see it opened and unbowelled, with all its intestines and inwards exposed to the eye. Others think there is in the original word an allusion to anatomists, who *open* and dissect human bodies, the heart, the liver, the lungs, the bowels, all exactly appear, whether sound or decayed: such a kind of anatomy doth God make upon man's heart; his piercing eye sees and discerns what is flesh and what is spirit in us; what is faith, and what is fancy, what is grace in reality, and what in appearance only. Doubtless the phrase doth signify a most intimate, full, and thorough knowledge of all persons and all things, which is found in that God with whom we have to do, and to whom we must give an account for all that we have done.

14 Seeing then that we have a great high-priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.

Our apostle comes now to assert the priesthood of Christ, and to set forth the dignity and excellency of his office; from whence he encourages the believing Hebrews to perseverance and steadfastness in the profession of their faith in him. Here note, 1. The eminency of the person,

Jesus the Son of God; not by supernatural conception only but by eternal generation also; this is the eminency of that person who is superior to men and angels. Note, 2. The excellency of his office, a priest, an high-priest, a great high-priest: not barely equal with Aaron, but superior to him, and infinitely above him, the universal, supreme pontiff of heaven and earth, in comparison of whom all other priests, even the highest of them, were but shadows. Note, 3. His relation to us, *We have him*; that is special interest in him, making profession of obedience to him; and he is *passed into the heavens*, to open heaven to us, and to make intercession with the Father for us. This entrance of Christ into heaven, was shadowed forth by the high-priest's entrance into the Holy of holies here on earth. Note, 4. Our obligation to him, *Let us hold fast our profession*; that is the profession of our faith in him, without wavering, with constancy and perseverance. Learn hence, 1. That great opposition ever has been, and always will be, made unto the steadfastness of believers in their holy profession. The apostle's exhortation plainly supposes opposition. Learn, 2. That it is our duty, in the midst of all opposition, to hold fast our holy profession, without either apostatizing in the whole, or declining in parts of it. The glory of God is in the highest manner concerned in it, and assured destruction attends the omission of it, and that in a peculiar, terrible, and dreadful manner, chap. x. 29. Learn, 3. That believers have great encouragement unto, and assistance in, the steadfastness and constancy of their holy profession, by, and from the priesthood of Jesus Christ: for as he is our high-priest, he knows our temptations, pities us under them, affords us actual help and relief against them; he interceding with the Father, that our faith may not fail, and that we may be kept by the almighty power of God, through faith unto salvation. Learn, 4. That Jesus Christ, our Great High-priest, was the Son of God; and the necessity of his being so, did thus appear; 1. Before the entrance of sin there was no need of the office of priesthood between God and man; for every one was then in his own name to go to God with his worship, which would have been accepted according to the law of creation. 2. Sin being entered into the world, there was no more worship to be performed immediately unto God; two cannot walk or converse together, except they be agreed. 3. That the worship of God might be again restored in and to the world, it was indispensably necessary that some one should interpose

between sinners and the holy God; for should sinners approach him immediately in their own names, he would be unto them a consuming fire. 4. No creature could undertake the office of being a priest for the church of God, which now consisteth all of sinners: neither the nature of the office which was to interpose between God and sinners, nor the quality of the work, which is to make atonement for sin, would admit of it. 5. Jesus Christ therefore undertaking to be a priest for sinners, it was necessary he should be what he was, the very Son of God; which denotes his divine person and nature, and that our great High-priest was essentially and truly God: *Seeing we have a great High-priest, even Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*

15 For we have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin.

These words contain a farther description of Christ, our great high-priest, by his merciful disposition towards his people; he is said to be *touched*, that is, sensibly affected, with the *infirmities*, that is, the miseries, sufferings, and calamities, which the human nature is exercised with, and exposed to. Our Lord Jesus Christ, now in heaven, doth exercise a tender and compassionate spirit towards his suffering children and servants here on earth: he has an experimental knowledge of what his people suffer, either from God, or from man, for God's sake, as one that is interested in them, as one concerned for them, as one related to them, yea, as being one with them. This sympathy of Christ, with and towards his suffering people, is a tender sympathy, an extensive sympathy, it reaches all our infirmities, a proportionable sympathy, answerable to every occasion, a perpetual sympathy; as long as he continues high-priest, and we remain subject to infirmities, so long will he be touched with the feeling of them. Observe farther, the assigned reason why our great High-priest is so sensibly affected with our suffering condition; namely, because he was in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted. Christ, by assuming our nature, became humbly affectionate, and by suffering our infirmities, became experimentally compassionate. Here note, That temptation may be without sin; it is not our sin to be tempted, but to comply with the temptation. 2. That Christ was tempted, yea, in all points tempted like unto us: his

temptations were in all points like ours, he was tempted to sin, yet without sin. There is a twofold temptation to sin, inward and outward; inwardly Christ was not tempted to sin, outwardly he was, and with greatest vehemency assaulted both by men and devils to the worst of sins that ever man was; but he always resisted, and always overcame. Oh! what a consolation is this unto us, under all our temptations, that Christ was in all things tempted like unto us, but without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

These words are an inference drawn from the apostle's foregoing discourse, "Seeing we have such an high-priest as is before described, let us come with boldness, with freedom and liberty, to the throne of grace, &c. Note here, 1. There is a throne of grace which believers may come unto. God has a throne of justice and a throne of grace: if he look upon man according to the law of works, he must needs sit upon the throne of justice as a severe Lord, and strict judge to condemn us; but being propitiated and atoned by the blood of Christ, his throne is a throne of grace and mercy, from which he represents himself to us as a God in Christ, as a God of forgiveness, as a God in covenant, and as a God that will have communion with us. Note, 2. That believers may come boldly and with confidence to this throne of grace; they have liberty to do it, they have authority to do it, and may have confidence and assurance of audience in the doing of it. Note, 3. That all help, succour, and spiritual assistance in every time of need, is found with God, and proceeds from mere mercy and grace in God: *That we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* Note, 4. That the way to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need, is by a due application of ourselves for it to the throne of grace: *Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may find help in time of need.*

CHAP. V.

Our apostle having in the foregoing chapters set forth the excellency of Christ's prophetic office, and proved him to have been a more excellent prophet than Moses, yea, a person superior to angels, and thereupon exhorted to perseverance in the profession of the gospel, he comes now in this and the following chapters to discourse of the priesthood of Christ, as far more excellent than that of Aaron's, and consequently that there was all imaginable reason to persevere in Christianity in respect of this office likewise. In the chapter before us, the apostle

informs us in the general what a high-priest is, shows that none can be so who is not called of God; and then proves Christ to be so called. For thus he speaks,

FOR every high-priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins;

Observe here, the apostle describes an high-priest several ways. 1. By his original, *He is one taken from amongst men*; that is, with the same nature with themselves, otherwise he had not been capable of those compassionate impressions which are required to the due discharge of his office. Thus Christ's participation of our nature was necessary to the discharge of his office as high-priest, and a manifest evidence that he will be tender and compassionate towards them whose nature he sustains and bears. 2. He is described by the general nature of his office, he is *ordained for men in things pertaining to God*; that is, he was to act and negotiate for the good of sinful men, in things wherein they have to do more immediately with Almighty God; particularly to offer gifts, oblations, and sacrifices for their sins. Where note, That it was the entrance of sin that made the office of the priesthood necessary: had it not been for sin, every one might have gone to God in his own person, but now God will not be immediately treated with by any, but through the interposition of a mediator; and he having first made an atonement for sin. 3. The high-priest is here described by the exercise of his office, and the special discharge of his duty, which is, *To offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins*, that is, to give satisfaction and make atonement for sin. Here note, That the light of nature dictates to us, that something ought to be offered unto God in acknowledgement of his supreme dominion; and because men are guilty of sin, and God essentially just, sacrifices must be offered, and a priest ordained to offer those sacrifices, for the averting of his wrath, and procuring of his favour; but by what sacrifices God will be atoned, and by whom, and in what manner they must be offered, not the law of nature, but the light of scripture, divine revelation, must teach us: *Every high-priest taken from among men, is ordained for men*; that is, instituted and appointed of God, for the service of men in things pertaining to God.

2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of

the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity:

Our apostle proceeds in giving the character of the high-priest which God required under the law; he must have compassion for men, for sinful men, being compassed with sinful infirmities himself. Observe here, 1. A great and necessary qualification or endowment of an high-priest: he was and is one able to have compassion; that is, able with all meekness and gentleness, with all patience and forgiveness, to bear the infirmities, sins, and provocations of men, even as a nurse bears with the weakness and frowardness of a poor infant. Observe, 2. The peculiar object of his compassionate care and regard; namely, those that are *ignorant*, and do wander out of the way: in these two ways does the apostle comprise all sorts of sinners whatsoever, with all sorts and kinds of sin. Observe, 3. A special reason rendered why the high-priest was thus compassionate: because *he himself is compassed with infirmities*; his own condition will remind him of his duty in this matter, being beset on every hand with infirmities of his own. Learn hence, 1. That it is a mighty privilege to us, that our Lord Jesus Christ, our great High-priest, was encompassed with the sinless infirmities of our nature. 2. That no sort of sinners are excluded from an interest in the care and love of our compassionate high-priest, such as are *ignorant*, and such as are *out of the way*, he has compassion upon both; none are excluded, but those who by unbelief do exclude themselves, and cause the blood of the reconciling sacrifice to cry against them.

3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also himself, to offer for sins.

That is, by reason of which infirmities he ought, both by God's command, and also from the reason and nature of the thing, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. Note here, That this is a description of the high-priest under the law, not of our Lord Jesus Christ, our great High-priest under the gospel, because Christ had actually no sin of his own to offer for, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. This expression, therefore, of offering for his own sins, belongs to the weakness and imperfection of the legal high-priest. Learn hence, That it was a part of the darkness and bondage of the church under the Old Testament, that their high-priests had need to offer sacrifices for themselves

and their own sins. This they did in the view of the people: they first took care to offer for their own sins, and then for the sins of others; whosoever dealeth with God about the sins of others, ought to look well in the first place unto his own: it is a great evidence of hypocrisy for men to be severe towards the sins of others, and careless about their own sins. Learn, 2. That such was the absolute holiness and spotless innocency of the Lord Jesus Christ, our great High-priest, that what he offered was not for himself, but for his people. Atonement for sinners was made by him who had no sin of his own to atone for.

4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. 5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high-priest: but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. 6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.

The foregoing verses declare the personal qualifications of the high-priest; where we have his call and commission to this office and function; the former made him meet for it, the latter gave him right unto it. *No man taketh this honour*, that is, the honour of priesthood, to himself, but only he that is called of God, as was Aaron and his posterity. Note here, 1. That it is an act of sovereignty in God, to call whom he pleases to his service. 2. That as it is an act of sovereignty in God, so it is a special dignity and honour to us to be duly called to, as well as qualified for, his work and service. Learn, 3. That the highest excellency and utmost necessity of any work or service to be here done for God, will by no means warrant our undertaking of it, and engaging in it, without a lawful call unto it. Learn, 4. That the more excellent any work of God is, the more express ought to be our calling to it. *No man taketh this honour upon him, but he that is called of God*; it were well if our lay preachers considered this. Observe next, How the apostle applies all this to Christ: *So also Christ, our great High-priest, glorified not himself to be made an high-priest* uncalled, but he dignified him who said unto him, *Thou art my Son*; and *thou art a priest for ever*, without succession, *after the order, similitude, and manner, of Melchizedek*. Learn hence, That the office of the high-priesthood over the church of God, was an honour and glory to Jesus Christ; it was

so to his human nature, even as it was united to his divine nature. *Christ glorified not himself to be made an high-priest*, implying that it was a glory and honour, though not assumed, but conferred: and that as Aaron was called of God, so was Christ, but in a more excellent and glorious manner. By this we understand the intolerable pride and bold presumption of many in these times, who take upon them to officiate in matters of religion, though neither qualified for nor called to this work: if ever any man or angel, then surely Christ might have taken this honour to himself, yet he did not uncalled. Verily this will be the eternal condemnation of all such usurpers, who, without any commission from God or man, undertake what they do not understand.

7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared:

Observe here, 1. A special act of Christ's priesthood or priestly office, *He offered up*. 2. The subject matter of his offering. *Supplications and prayers*. 3. The intense manner of his offering, *With strong cries and tears*. 4. The person to whom he offered, *Unto God, Who was able to save him from death*. 5. The time of his offering, *In the days of his flesh*; that is, in the time of this mortal life, when clothed with our frail nature. 6. The issue and success of all this, *He was heard in that he feared*. Learn hence, 1. That the holy Jesus did not only take upon him our human nature, but the infirmities of our nature also. Christ had in this world a time of infirmities as well as ourselves. True, his infirmities were sinless, but sorrowful and grievous, which exposed him to all sorts of temptations and sufferings. Learn, 2. That the Lord Jesus Christ, our great High-priest, offered up most ardent prayers and supplications to Almighty God, in the days of his flesh, upon his own and our behalf. The text mentions, *prayers and supplications, with strong cries*. Learn, 3. That Christ shed tears as well as blood for a lost world: he offered up strong cries and tears. By this he showed the truth of his humanity, and that he did not accept only the human nature, but did also assume human affections. Learn, 4. That Christ's prayers were always heard, either in kind or in equivalency. He was not specifically heard as to the passing of the cup from him, when he prayed in the gar-

den, but he was equivalently heard as to the support of his spirit, and to the supplies of strength to enable him to drink the bitter cup with silence and submission: *He was heard in that he feared*, by being delivered, not from death, but out of death, as his followers must expect to be delivered.

8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered:

Observe here, 1. Christ's eminent dignity; he was a Son, that is, the Son of God, and God himself; *The Word was God*, John i. 1. And as the Word was made flesh, so he was nearer to God than any other person; he was a Son, a sinless Son, yet a suffering Son: and he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. Observe, 2. As Christ's eminent dignity, so his exemplary obedience: he learned obedience, not by personal speculation, but by real experience; he experimentally understood what obedience was. Note here, That there are two ways of learning obedience. 1. By the comprehension of the mind. 2. By the experience of sense. Christ as God was perfect in knowledge, nothing could be added to him; but when he became man, then he came to understand and learn by sufferings, which was a new method and way of knowing. And the obedience which Christ learnt, was free and voluntary, universal and complete, sincere and pure, persevering and constant. Christ learned this lesson of obedience, not barely to know it, but to do it; to learn to obey, is to obey by the things which he suffered; he did perfectly learn, and experimentally understand, what obedience was. O blessed Jesus! as didst thou, so may we learn practical obedience by the things which we suffer.

9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

Observe here, 1. A choice and singular blessing and benefit spoken of, and that is, eternal salvation; which implies not only deliverance from hell, and redemption from eternal misery, but the obtaining of eternal life and happiness. Observe, 2. The author of this great blessing and benefit to mankind, namely, Jesus Christ our great High-priest, who by making atonement for us, and reconciling us to God, is said to be the *author of eternal salvation* to mankind. Observe, 3. The way and means whereby he became the author of our salvation; and that was, by being made perfect. The original word is an allusion to one that runs in a race, where he that wins receives the

crown. Thus Christ having finished his course of sufferings, and received the reward of them, by being raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God, he is said to be made perfect. Observe, 4. The qualification of the persons who are made partakers of this great benefit, or the condition upon which it is offered and tendered: and that is, obedience: *He became the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him*. Quest. 1. How does Christ become the author of eternal salvation? Ans.

As a rule and pattern, as a price and propitiation, and as an advocate and patron: by the purity of his doctrine, as a rule; by the piety of his example, as a pattern; by the merit of his obedience and sufferings, as a propitiation; and by his prevailing intercession, as our advocate now in heaven. Where note, That the virtue of his intercession in heaven is founded on his satisfaction here on earth, in shedding of his blood for us. Quest. 2. What obedience does the gospel require as a condition, and is pleased to accept as a qualification, in those who hope for eternal salvation? Ans. Negatively, not a bare external profession of obedience, though accompanied with prophesying and working miracles, but an hearty and universal conformity to the precepts of the gospel in sincerity and uprightness; allowing ourselves in the neglect of no known duty, nor in the practice of any known sin. Quest. 3. But is fallen man under a possibility now of performing this obedience? Ans. We are no more sufficient of ourselves, and by any power of our own, to perform the conditions of the gospel, than we are able to answer the demands of the law. But the grace of God is offered to us, and stands ready to assist us to perform the conditions which the gospel requires. Consequently,

what the grace of God stands ready to enable us to do, if we be not wanting to ourselves, that may properly be said to be possible to us, and in some sense in our power to perform. Quest. 4. But is not making our obedience the condition of our salvation, prejudicial to the freeness of God's grace, and the law of faith? Ans. In no wise; seeing it is acknowledged, that faith is the root of all true holiness and evangelical obedience; that we stand continually in need of the assistance of God's grace to enable us to perform that obedience which the gospel requires, and is pleased to accept: and that God confers eternal life upon us, not for the merit of our obedience, but only for the sake of Christ. The sum of all is this, That it is indispensably necessary for a man to be a good man, that he may get to heaven; and

that it is the greatest presumption in the world for any man to hope to attain salvation without obedience and a holy life. For though our obedience cannot merit heaven, yet it does qualify and fit us for heaven; though it doth not make us worthy, yet doth it make us *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*. And who-soever finds fault with this doctrine, finds fault with the gospel itself.

10 Called of God an high-priest, after the order of Melchizedek.

These words may be looked upon as an evidence and testimony, that the Lord Jesus Christ was and is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him, because he is *a priest after the order of Melchizedek*; that is, because his priesthood is eternal. Note here, 1. That God was pleased to put a signal honour upon the person and office of Melchizedek, that in him there should be an early and excellent representation made of the person and priesthood of Jesus Christ. Melchizedek was an illustrious type of Christ; he was the first personal type of Christ that ever was in the world; after him were many others, and he was the only type of the person of Christ that ever was in the world. Others were types of Christ in the execution of his office, but none but Melchizedek were ever types of his person; for being introduced without father, without mother, without beginning of days or end of life, he was made like to the Son of God, of whom it is said, *Who can declare his generation?* And farther, Melchizedek was a type of Christ in those two great offices of a King and a Priest, which none but he ever was. Note, 2. That the priesthood of Christ was not after the order of Aaron, which was to expire, and not to last long, but after the order of Melchizedek, which was to continue and last for ever: *Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*. This priesthood of Christ is an eternal priesthood: *He ever liveth to make intercession for us*.

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

That is, of which priesthood of Christ, as compared with Melchizedek, we have much to say, which is not easy to make intelligible by words, to those that are ignorant and dull of understanding. Learn hence, 1. That all scripture truths are not equally easy to be understood, but require a peculiar diligence in our attendance upon them, that they may be understood. Learn, 2. That it is the incapacity of hearers,

through dulness and slothfulness, and want of preparatory knowledge, which makes scripture-teaching no more and no better understood. All our miscarriages under the word, are to be resolved into our own sloth, negligence, and depraved affections: *We have many things to say, but ye are dull of hearing*.

12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

As if the apostle had said, "When for the time that you have professed the Christian faith, you ought to have been able to be teachers of it to others, you have need yourselves to be instructed in the first rudiments of the Christian religion, and are become such as have need of milk, the food of babes, and not of strong meat, the food of men." Learn hence, 1. That the time when, and how long we enjoy the dispensation of the gospel, is a circumstance which must in particular be accounted for: whereas *for the time*: all have time, but all have not time alike; the day of the gospel is not of the same length to all nations, churches, and persons. Learn, 2. That it is reasonably expected by God that persons should thrive and grow in knowledge and holiness proportionably to their time and means; and not doing so, is charged upon them as a great aggravation of their guilt. *For the time ye ought to have been teachers*; that is, of ability, sufficient for the teaching of others. They had not learned of their teachers, when the apostle had reason to hope they had been able to teach their learners. Many after long teaching are ignorant, and ought to be taught again the same things which they long ago heard. Learn, 3. That the holy scriptures are to be looked upon, consulted with, and admitted to, as the oracles of God; they are sometimes called the living, sometimes the lively, oracles of God, because they are the oracles of the living God, and also life-giving oracles to them that obey him. Learn, 4. That there are in the scripture truths suitable to the spiritual instruction and edification of all sorts of persons; there is in it both milk and strong meat, plain doctrines and first principles necessary for all, and truths of a deeper search than are profitable to some. "In the scripture, said one, there are shallows and there are depths; fords where the lambs may wade, and depths where the elephants may swim."

13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

Our apostle here speaks of the difference of doctrines under the metaphor of meats; from whence we may gather, 1. That the word of God, in the dispensation of it, is food provided for the souls of men. 2. That the word, as food, will not profit the soul until it be eaten, and digested: it is not food prepared, but food received, that nourishes. When manna was gathered and eaten, it nourished the Israelites: but when gathered and laid by, it putrified and bred worms. Lord! what pains do some take to gather manna, to hear the word! but, alas! it lies by them, and is of no use. Learn, 3. That as the gospel is the word of righteousness, so God requires and expects that all those who live under the dispensation of the gospel should be skilful in the word of righteousness. The gospel is the word of righteousness; it is so declaratively, it is so efficiently; declaratively, as the severity of God against sin is hereby more fully revealed, and as the righteousness which God requireth, approveth, and accepteth for our justification, is therein declared; and the righteousness which God requireth in us, and expecteth from us, is hereby discovered also; and as it is the great instrument of working holiness in us, and making us inherently righteous, so it is the word of righteousness efficiently, as well as declaratively; our justification is wrought in us thereby, *John xvii. 17.* Learn, 4. That the spiritual sense of believers, well exercised in the word of righteousness, are the best and most undeceiving helps in judging of what is good or evil, what is true or false, that is proposed to them: *Such, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

CHAP. VI.

The holy apostle having in the foregoing chapters largely treated of the divinity of our Saviour's person, and the dignity of his priesthood; showing that he was a more excellent priest than Aaron, even an eternal high-priest, after the order of Melchizedek, in whom both crown and mitre, kingdom and priesthood, did concentre; In the close of the foregoing chapter, he gave the Hebrews a very smart reproof for their dulness and ignorance, comparing them to children, yea, to babes that must be fed with milk, that is, plain and easy doctrine; the first principles and rudiments of Christianity, as being incapable of

strong meats, that is, the harder and higher mysteries of religion.

He begins this chapter with an exhortation to them, to increase both in knowledge and obedience; exciting them to advance to an higher and more perfect degree of knowledge in the Christian religion, than the first principles and ground-work of it. And accordingly he thus bespeaks them, ver. 1.

THEREFORE, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection;

In these words of the apostle, he seems to allude to the building of an house: as in that we first lay a good and sure foundation, but do not rest there, but proceed in raising up the fabric; in like manner, it is neither satisfactory nor sufficient to advance no further in the Christian religion, than the knowledge of the first principles of it, but endeavours must be used to attain a more perfect degree and measure of knowledge in the mysteries of the gospel. *Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ;* he means not leaving them so as to forget them, and lay them aside, but to leave them by going beyond them, and advancing further and higher in the knowledge of Christianity. Learn hence, 1. That in Christianity and other sciences, there are certain rudiments and fundamental principles, which must and ought to be carefully taught. 2. That it is a necessary and useful practice in the church of God, to teach the doctrine of Christianity in the first principles of it plainly and summarily to young beginners. Learn, 3. That when the ministers of the gospel have laid a good foundation of scripture knowledge in the understanding of their hearers, they must excite them by all pressing considerations to make a further progress in their knowledge, and leaving the doctrine of the beginning of Christ, *go on unto perfection.*

—Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God. 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this will we do, if God permit.

Still our apostle pursues his metaphor, in comparing Christianity to a building, and the first rudiments or principles of the Christian religion to a foundation that supports the superstructure. Next he summarily declares what these fundamental doctrines and first principles of the Christian religion are, namely, these six. 1. *Repentance*, or a turning from all sinful works, called *dead works*, because they end in death; dead because deadly; they pre-

ceed from death spiritual, and end in death eternal. 2. *Faith towards God*, or faith in God; that is, in the whole Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Particularly, faith in the first original promise of God, to send Christ into the world to save us from our sins, and granting remission of sins by him. Here note, How closely repentance and faith are united and knit together: where the one is, there is the other; and where either is not, there is neither. He repenteth not, who hath not faith towards God; and he hath not faith towards God, who repenteth not. 3. *The doctrine of baptisms*; that is, of both the Christian sacraments, as also of the covenant of grace, of which the sacraments are seals. Persons admitted into the church by baptism, ought to be well instructed, as soon as capable of it, in the nature, use, and end of the sacraments; acquainting them not only with the nature of the outward sign, but with the necessity of the inward grace. *The doctrine of laying on of hands*, to confirm the baptized persons in the faith, and to oblige and enable them to keep the covenant they entered into with God when they were baptized; which was done before their admission to the Lord's table. Imposition, or laying on of hands, was an ancient and venerable rite used in the primitive church upon several occasions; particularly in ordination, in absolution of penitents, in healing the sick, in conferring the gifts of the Holy Ghost, *Acts viii.* 17. And, lastly, in confirmation, when baptized persons were brought before the church to acknowledge, confirm, and renew their baptismal covenant with God; and to receive the benefit of public prayer, and episcopal benediction, in order to the further endowments of grace to perform their vows, adorn their profession, and be admitted to the Lord's table, as complete members of the visible church of Christ. 5. *The resurrection of the dead*, a doctrine denied by the Sadducees, derided by the Athenian philosophers, and perverted by heretics; but is a fundamental principle of the gospel; the faith whereof is indispensably necessary unto our consolation, and has a peculiar influence upon our obedience. This is the animating principle of gospel obedience, because we are assured, that our services shall not only be remembered, but rewarded also. 6. *The eternal judgment*, which will doom men to everlasting rewards and punishments in a future state. The ministers of the gospel ought to dwell much upon this fundamental principle of religion, to represent the dread and terror of that eternal day to all men, to the intent they may be excited and

stirred up to take effectual care that they fall not under the vengeance of that fatal day. These six principles being laid down by the apostle, he tells them his resolution to endeavour the carrying of them on to a more perfect degree and measure of knowledge in the mysteries of the gospel, in order to their becoming skilful in the word of righteousness: *Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; which we will do if God permit.*

4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

By the *enlightened* here, understand those that were baptized, and embraced Christianity: the ancients called baptism *illumination*; and baptized persons, *the enlightened*; because of the divine illumination which was conveyed to the minds of men by the knowledge of Christianity. By *tasting the heavenly gift*, and being made *partakers of the Holy Ghost*, understand such as had not only heard of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, but had some experience of them themselves; as also of the spiritual benefits conferred upon them in baptism, by the Holy Spirit. By *tasting the good word of God*, understand some relish of the truth and goodness of the gospel, some pleasure in entertaining it, by reason of the gracious promises of eternal life and happiness contained in it. The gospel that proclaimed remission of sins, was a *good word*; this good word they saw confirmed by miracles, tongues, and prophecy, and so could not but be convinced of the truth of it, which is here called a *tasting* it. Who have *tasted the good word of God*; it follows, *and the powers of the world to come*; that is, the power of the gospel age; for "world to come," in the language of the prophets, doth signify the times of the Messiah: and thus the *powers of the world to come*, are the miraculous powers of the Holy Ghost bestowed upon men, in order to the propagation of the gospel; such were the gifts of healing, casting out devils, working miracles. Others, by *tasting the powers of the world to come*, understand some apprehensions of the resurrection and future judgment, with affections suitable thereunto. Now concerning these, says our apostle, *if they fall away*; that is, if

they shall, after all this, apostatize from this profession, out of love to this present world, or from fear of persecution and sufferings, if they shall relapse either to heathenism or judaism, *it is impossible to renew them again to repentance*; that is, it is a thing very difficult, hardly to be hoped for, that such wilful apostates should be restored again by repentance: *Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*; that is, they virtually, and in effect, crucify him over again, as much as in them lies; for by denying and renouncing of him, they declare him to be an impostor, and consequently worthy of death. So that the plain sense of the word seems to be this: "If those that are baptized, and have received the doctrines of the gospel, and are endowed with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, shall yet, after this, apostatize from Christianity, it is very difficult, and next to an impossibility, to recover such again by repentance; seeing they are guilty of as great a crime, as if in their own persons they had put to death and ignominiously used the Son of God." Here note, That it is not a partial apostasy from the Christian religion, by any particular vicious practice, but a total apostasy from Christianity, and more especially to the heathen idolatry, which is here intended. From the whole learn, 1. That they which have been enlightened, awakened, and made partakers of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit in some measure, and tasted the sweetness of the word and ways of God, in some degree, may yet fall away. 2. That if such do fall away, it is very difficult, though not altogether impossible, to renew them again to repentance: and that for these reasons. 1. Because of the greatness and heinous nature of the sin, it being a downright apostasy from God, against the clearest light and knowledge, and fullest conviction of a man's mind; and the highest affront to the Son of God, who revealed the Christian religion to the world, and sealed it with his blood. 2. Because those who are guilty of this sin, do renounce and cast off the means of their recovery, and therefore it becomes extremely difficult to renew them again to repentance: they reject Christ and his holy gospel, and refuse the only remedy appointed for their recovery. 3. Because it is so high a provocation to God, to withdraw his grace and Holy Spirit from such persons, by the power and efficacy whereof they should be brought to repentance; God justly leaving those who so unworthily leave him. Lord! how fearful and fatal a condition is it, to begin in the Spirit and

end in the flesh; to decay in religion, and apostatize from grace; to have had some work of the Spirit and word upon our hearts, so as to have light and love, some taste and savour of religion, some desires after and hopes of heaven, and, after all, to cool and give over, to revolt and backslide, and have our latter end worse than our beginning!

7 For the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: 8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

The design and scope of our apostle in these words is threefold: 1. To set forth the excellency and necessity of the gospel, dispensed to us in the ministry of the word; he compares it to rain, which doth soften, refresh, and fructify the earth. 2. He discovers the different effect which the word of God, or the doctrine of the gospel, has upon different persons that sit under the preaching and dispensation of it: The sincere Christian becomes fruitful under the dews and showers of divine grace, and receives a blessing; but the barren and fruitless professor is like an howling wilderness or dry desert, which, after innumerable refreshing showers, brings forth nothing but briers and thorns. 3. He declares the different state and condition of such persons. A people that answers God's care and cost, is like a field that drinks in the rain, bringeth forth herbs, and receives a blessing. But such a people, as, after all the refreshing showers from heaven, and after all the culture and labour of God's husbandmen on earth, shall remain bushes and briers, barren and unfruitful under all, or worse than such; they are *nigh unto cursing*, and their end is to be burned. Blessing attends the one, burning awaits the other. Note, 1. That what the rain is to the earth, that is the word of God and the doctrine of the gospel to the souls of men. Is the rain of heavenly extraction? so is the word of God. Does the rain fall by divine direction? so does the word preached. Does the rain distil down gradually and successively, not all at once? so does the word fall, here a little and there a little. Does the rain mollify and soften, revive and refresh, fructify and make fruitful; where it falls? so does the word preached, Col. i. 6. The word of the gospel is come unto you, and bringeth forth fruit since the day ye heard of it. In a word, As after plenty

of rain there follows a great drought, and want of rain: so after a long and plentiful enjoyment of the gospel, if people do not prize and improve their mercies, God will cut them short, and deprive them of them. Note, 2. That it is possible for a people to sit long under the ministry of the word; that spiritual rain, that celestial dew, may be daily dropping and distilling down upon them, and yet that people may be bush and brier after all, barren and unfruitful in the account of God. Note, 3. That a people so remaining, and under such advantages, are *nigh unto cursing, and their end is to be burned*. Barrenness under the dispensation of the gospel, is always accompanied with an increase of sin, and of condemnation also; those that are not, because they will not, be healed and reformed by the preaching of the gospel, are righteously given up by God to extreme obstinacy and final obduration.

9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. 10 For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Observe here, 1. The holy wisdom of our apostle, in mollifying the severity of the foregoing commination and prediction; and the good hope and firm persuasion he had of the Hebrew's perseverance in grace unto salvation, notwithstanding all the cautions and warnings he gave them of apostasy and apostates: *I am persuaded better things of you, though I thus speak*. We may represent the ugly and filthy face of sin to our best friends, to the end that they may hate it, and escape it: we may be confident of another's sincerity, and, as occasion requires, publicly testify that confidence to themselves: *We are persuaded better things of you*. Observe, 2. The ground of this confidence declared, and that is twofold: 1. The graces of God's spirit found operative in them; their faith in Christ, and love to all his members; it was a working faith and laborious love that was found with them, *They have administered to the saints, and do minister*. Behold, the nature of Christian love, it is an immortal fire, ever burning, never dying. 2. Another ground of this persuasion, was the knowledge of God's faithfulness in remembering and rewarding this their labour of love: *God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love*; that is, God is righteous, and will certainly remember and reward your faith,

your charity, and good works: for he has promised so to do, and he is faithful that has promised. Learn hence, 1. That faith, if it be a living faith, will be a working faith. Obedience is the fruit of faith, and we ought to look on obedience as our work. Learn, 2. That it is the will and pleasure of God, that many of his saints and servants in this world be in such a condition, wherein they stand in need of being ministered unto. Learn, 3. That the best evidence we can have of the sincerity of our love, is its readiness to minister to the saints in all distresses. Learn, 4. That both the labour of our sufferings and the labour of our services, shall be remembered and rewarded by a righteous God: *God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister*.

11 And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

Note here, 1. That although the apostle had a firm persuasion that they were sincere and upright, and would hold on their way, yet he exhorts them to show the same diligence which they had done, and persevere to the end as they had begun. Learn hence, That ministerial exhortation unto duty is needful, even unto them that are sincere in the practice of it, that they may abide and continue therein: *We desire that you show diligence unto the end*. Note, 2. The special duty he exhorts them to, and that is, to attain a full assurance of hope. Hope is a certain and assured expectation of good things promised, accompanied with love, and a longing desire to enjoy them. A full assurance of hope, is such a fixed, constant, and prevailing persuasion, concerning the good things promised, and our certain enjoyment of them, as will support us under, and carry us through, all the difficulties and troubles that we conflict with. Learn hence, That a good man may in this life arrive at an assurance of faith and hope, as touching the goodness of his condition in the life to come. The original word signifies a full gale of hope; a metaphor taken from sailors, who enter the harbour with a full gale of wind, both with facility and safety. The Christian's soul is as a ship sailing in a tempestuous sea; faith represents the pilot, love the sail, hope the wind that must fill the sail: be the pilot never so confident, the sail spread to the utmost, yet without a gale of wind, the ship lies becalmed, moves not towards the harbour. A Christian on earth without hope, is as a ship at sea without wind.

Note, 2. The special means directed to, in order to the attaining of this full assurance of hope, and that is, to show diligence, the same diligence, and that to the end. Learn thence, That Christians ought by no means to wax secure, but to use all diligence to the end of their lives, for the heightening of their hope to a full assurance: *We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.*

12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Our apostle having exhorted the Hebrews to great diligence in good works in the former verse, in this verse endeavours to excite and provoke them to it by the examples of deceased saints, who are now reaping the reward of their former pains, and inheriting the promises. Here note, 1. A cautionary direction given, *That ye be not slothful*, either timorous and faint-hearted, or remiss and negligent. God having engaged so firmly on his part to let nothing be wanting which is requisite to enable us to persevere; if we miss of the promise, that is, heaven, the good promised, we must thank our own sloth for it. Note, 2. The great duty exhorted to, and that is, to be followers of the saints: *Be followers of them*, that is, vigorously and constantly imitate them in their graces and gracious conversation. The graces of the saints (whether living or dead) are patterns presented to our imitation. Note, 3. The particular and special graces in the saints which we are to imitate and follow, namely, their faith and patience: their faith, that is, their firm trust in God, and belief of his promises, relying on his word under all trials: and their patience, that is, their perseverance in well-doing, and patient expectation under all delays, and constant adherence to him under all difficulties. Learn hence, 1. That heaven is not ours by purchase, but by promise. 2. That heaven is a promised inheritance, which saints by faith and patience have possessed. 3. That by being followers of them in their faith and patience, we may also come with them to inherit the promise.

13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, **14** Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. **15** And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

The apostle having told us in general,

that the saints by faith and patience do inherit the promises, instances here particularly in Abraham, unto whom God made a promise of multiplying his seed greatly to him, and confirmed that promise by an oath. But Abraham waited long by faith and patience for the complete fulfilling of the promise; and so must we: God delights to be trusted by his people upon his word and oath; and when they do not live to see the promise of God fulfilled, they glorify him exceedingly, by dying in the faith and firm belief that it shall be fulfilled in God's own appointed time. Note here, The wonderful condescension of God towards the infirmity of men; he swears, he swears by himself, he pawns and pledges his godhead, and if he performs not what he promises and swears, is willing to forfeit it. *O felices nos! quorum causa Deus jurat. O Miserrimi! si nec juranti credamus.* "O happy man! for whose sake God condescends to swear. O miserable man! if we doubt God's promise confirmed by his oath, in which he has laid down his godhead as a stake and pawn, never to take it up again, if he fails in the least jot in the punctual performance of it."

16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

These words contain a reason, why God, in gracious condescension to man's infirmity, is pleased to confirm his promise with an oath; it is to determine a controversy, and put an end to a strife depending between God and his fallen creatures: and this is the general reason for an oath amongst men, it is to put bounds and limits to the contentions and contradictions of men, to make an end of all strife between them, which otherwise would be perpetuated, and to bring them to a mutual acquiescency; *An oath for confirmation is an end of all strife.* Learn hence, 1. That there is, as we are in a state of nature, a strife and difference between God and us. 2. That the promises of the gospel are gracious proposals of the only way and means for the ending of that strife. 3. That the oath of God, interposed for the confirmation of these promises, is every way sufficient on God's part, to put a period to this strife, and to establish a firm peace with us through the blood of Christ. *Men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife.*

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; **18**

That by two immutable things, in which it *was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation.—

Here the apostle acquaints us with the design of God, in confirming his promise, namely, to manifest the immutability of his counsel to us, that is, his decree and purpose for our salvation; to the intent that by his word and oath we might have strong consolation. So unspeakable is the weakness of our faith, that we stand in need of the utmost condescension of God for its confirmation. Note here, That God has made many promises for the confirmation of his people's faith. God's oath is a surety for his promises, and that God's end, both in his promise and his oath, is to give his people the highest assurance and strongest consolation. *Quest.* Why are we so hard to believe God upon his single word; yea, can scarce trust him upon his oath? *Ans.* Because of our guilt: now guilt is always full of fear, and fear full of suspicion and distrust; and because the way of reconciliation is so rare and wonderful, that we can scarce conceive it, much less believe it; also the privileges of the gospel are so glorious, that they exceed our belief. And because we ourselves are so false and fickle, both with God and one another, that promises, vows, and oaths, are all little enough to hold us. Now we are apt to measure God by ourselves, therefore he gives us his oath. Inference, 1. How ought we to bind ourselves to God by oath, seeing he condescends thus to bind himself to us! 2. How unreasonable is it for the believer to distrust God upon his oath! This is not only to accuse God of a lie, but to impeach him of perjury. 3. How absurd is it for the impenitent sinner not to tremble at the threatenings of God, which are confirmed by an oath, as well as his promises! *I have sworn in my wrath, they shall never enter into my rest.*

—Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

In these words there is an allusion to the cities of refuge spoken of under the law: God appointed six of them, for those to fly unto who were guilty of casual homicide, or killing a man by chance, that so they might avoid the fury of the avenger of blood. Now these cities of refuge were an illustrious type of Christ. Note here, 1. Christ is here the believer's city of refuge, the only sanctuary for distressed souls. 2. That believers do by faith fly unto him for refuge, when the guilt of sin, and the wrath of God for sin, do pursue and follow

them. This flying for refuge doth imply diligence and earnestness, as in the case of life and death, yea, unwearied diligence; and it implies continuance in this refuge, when once got into it, not to stir out of it for all the world. Lord! open the eyes and awaken the consciences of all impenitent sinners, make them sensible that the avenger of blood is at their heels, and that their damnation slumbers not, if they do not presently fly from the wrath to come, and take sanctuary in thy Son.

19 Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

In these words we have the nature of a Christian's hope described, 1. By a metaphorical, 2. By a typical, similitude. 1. Observe the metaphor made use of, to set forth the nature and office of hope, it is compared to an anchor: *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul.* Doth the anchor hold fast the ship, and keep it steady, both in storms and tempests, and in the midst of the most tumultuous waves? in like manner, the hope of eternal glory quiets, stays, and strengthens, the Christian's spirit, when tossed upon the waves of this troublesome world. Learn hence, 1. That believers are exposed to many storms and tempests here in this world; their afflictions, persecutions, temptations, fears, &c. are compared fitly to storms, because of their fierceness and violence, and because of their tendency to ruin and destruction. Learn, 2. That these storms would prove ruinous to the souls of believers, did not hope, the anchor of the soul, take fast hold on the promises of the gospel, which keeps the Christian firm and invincible against all opposition: *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.* Observe, 2. Hope is described by a typical similitude; it *entereth into that within the veil.* The veil here alluded to, is that which parted the holy of holies from the body of the temple, a type of heaven. The heavens are as a veil to the sense and reason of man, there their sight and their thoughts are bounded, they can neither discern nor judge of any thing that is above or within that veil: but faith and hope pierce through it: no created thing can keep them at a distance from God himself. As the anchor stays not in the waves of the sea, but pierces through them all till it comes to the solid bottom; so the Christian's hope fixes on nothing under heaven, but pierces through all till it *entereth into that within the veil*; that is, till it fixes on God as the author, on Christ as the purchaser, on the

Spirit as the insurer, on the covenant as the conveyor of all grace, mercy, and peace. Here hope fixes itself to hold the soul firm and steadfast in all the storms that may befall it. Learn hence, 1. That the hope and faith of believers are invisible unto the world; they enter *within the veil*, where the world's eye can never follow them. Learn, 2. That hope firmly fixed on God in Christ by the promise, will hold the soul steady, and keep the Christian tight, in all the storms that may befall it: *It is an anchor both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.*

20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high-priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Observe here, The person spoken of, Christ; the subject matter spoken of him, his entering into heaven; and the quality in which he entered heaven, namely, as our forerunner. This denotes, 1. His public capacity, that he entered heaven in our name, and to negotiate our affairs. 2. His absolute precedency: he is our forerunner, but he himself had no forerunner, none that entered before him in their own names, but in his, and upon his account, through the virtue of his merits, and by the prevalence of his mediation. Learn hence, 1. That there is a place and a state of happiness above, prepared for pious souls, which Christ is already entered into, and has taken possession of; this place may be considered in its amplitude and largeness, in its stability and firmness, in its sanctity and holiness, in its pleasure and delightfulness, in its glory and blessedness, in its eternity and everlastingness. And this place is by Christ prepared for believers, namely, by his death and satisfaction, by his resurrection and ascension, by his mediation and intercession. Learn, 2. That our Lord Jesus Christ is not only entered into heaven, but entered as our forerunner, to take and keep possession of it in the name and stead of all believers.—To enter heaven as our forerunner, implies, that he entered in our nature, that he keeps possession of it in our names: as sure as the head is gone before the members, so certainly shall the members follow their head, as a forerunner supposes others to follow after; and it implies, that Christ will put us into the actual possession of heaven in his own time. Inference, 1. Is Christ gone before to heaven, then let us be willing to follow him in the way of obedience, and in the way of suffering, as well as to meet him in the end. 2. To make haste after him. Did he fly as an eagle towards hea-

ven, and shall we creep like a snail? Is not the bosom of Christ more desirable than the arms of our dearest friends? Shall we not enjoy all comforts in the enjoyment of our Comforter? 3. Let our hearts at present be with him. Oh, where should our hearts be but where our head is!

CHAP. VII.

Our apostle in this chapter returns to his discourse concerning the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, from which he had digressed in the former chapter, and shows us in this wherein Melchizedek was a type of Christ; to wit, in his name, King of Righteousness; in his title, King of Salem, or peace; in his original, without pedigree, or descent; in the excellency of his person, to be preferred before Abraham, and all the Levites that descended from him; in the eminency of his priesthood, which could and did make a perfect expiation for sin, which the Levitical priesthood never did, nor ever could do; and accordingly thus he speaks, ver. 1.

FOR this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him; 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all: first being by interpretation, King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; 3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but, made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.

Here observe, 1. The person spoken of described by his name, Melchizedek. Some take this Melchizedek to be Shem, the son of Noah; but this cannot be, because his genealogy is exactly set down by Moses. Others take him to be one of the posterity of Japhet, the father of the Gentiles: in the midst of these sinners above others, was Melchizedek raised up as an illustrious type of Christ, the promised Messiah. See here how God can raise up instruments for his service, and unto his glory, when, where, and how he pleaseth. And learn hence, That this signal prefiguration of Christ, in the nations of the world, at the same time when Abraham received the promises for himself and his posterity, gave a pledge and assurance of the certain future call of the Gentiles unto an interest in him, and participation of him. Observe, 2. Melchizedek is here described by his office; he was *king of Salem*, and a priest of the most high God; yea, the first that was so by special institution, and separated to the office by God's

approbation; none went before him, and none succeeded him in his office. Here note, That the first personal instituted type of Christ was Melchizedek, as priest; for in his kingly office he was not so directly typical of Christ. There were moral types of Christ's person before Melchizedek, as Adam, Abel, and Noah, which represented him in sundry things: but the first person who solemnly designed to represent Christ by what he was and did, was Melchizedek the priest; teaching us, that the foundation of all that the Lord Christ had to do in and for the church, was laid in his priestly office, whereby he made atonement and reconciliation for sin: *Melchizedek, king of Salem, and priest of the most high God.* Observe, 3. He is described by several actions and circumstances:—1. *He met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings.* This meeting of Melchizedek and Abraham, after Abraham had gotten the victory over all his adversaries, was a type and representation of the glorious meeting of Christ and his church at the last day: then he will bring out of his stores in heaven for their eternal refreshment, as Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine to refresh Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings. 2. He blessed him, Gen. xiv. 19. *And Melchizedek said, Blessed be Abraham of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.* Sacerdotal blessings were authoritative, and that by special institution. In this blessing of Abraham by Melchizedek, all believers are virtually blessed by Jesus Christ: Melchizedek represented Christ in what he then did, and Abraham represented all his believing posterity, in what he then received. 3. Another sacerdotal act, or exercise of priestly power, ascribed to Melchizedek, is, that he received Abraham tithes of all; the one paid them in a way of duty, the other received them in a way of office. Note here, The antiquity of tithes, and how very ancient they were: they were paid in Abraham's time, long before the ceremonial law, and therefore cannot be said to be Jewish and Levitical. The Patriarchs before the law, the Jews under the law, and the Christians in times of the gospel, have all paid this proportion; from whence some have concluded, that as the seventh part of our time, so the tenth part of our goods and estates, were given to God from the beginning, as lord of all our time, and proprietor of all our estate.

Whatsoever we receive signally from God, in a way of mercy, we ought to return a proportion of it to him in a way of duty. It is a certain sign that a man

has not engaged God in getting an estate, when he will not entitle him to any portion of it when it is gotten. Observe, 4. The apostle proceeds unto other instances in the description of Melchizedek, wherein he was made like unto the Son of God, ver. 3. *Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life.* Which expressions must not be understood absolutely but tropically; not of Melchizedek as a man, but as a priest; for as a man, he had certainly both father and mother, though not recorded in scripture; he was assuredly born, and did no less certainly die than other men: but neither his beginning of days nor end of life, are registered and rehearsed, that he might be the fitter type of Christ, concerning whom it is said, *Who can declare his generation?* But though Melchizedek as man, had father and mother, yet as a priest he had no predecessor nor successor; no predecessor from whom he might by birth receive his sacerdotal power; no successor, who derived his priesthood from him. Now herein also was Melchizedek an illustrious type of Christ, who derived his priesthood from no mortal predecessor, but immediately from his heavenly Father: neither will he transmit it to any successor, but when all enemies are subdued he shall resign his priesthood, together with his kingdom, to God the Father, who gave him both. Observe, 6. What is here asserted concerning Melchizedek; namely, that he abideth *a priest for ever*; that is, things are so related concerning him in scripture, as that there is no mention of the ending of the priesthood of his order. We read of no resignation of his office, or of the succession of any person to him therein; and thus he remaineth a priest for ever. This was that which our apostle did principally design to confirm from hence, namely, that there was in the scripture, before the institution of the Aaronical priesthood, a representation of an eternal and unchangeable priesthood, to be introduced in the church, which he demonstrates to be that of Jesus Christ, of which Melchizedek's priesthood was a type.

4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

These words are the apostle's application of what was before discoursed; by comparing Melchizedek's excellency with Abraham's, he shows Christ's excellency above Melchizedek's, and then calls upon them to consider this, *Consider how great this*

was was. It will be fruitless, and to no advantage, to propose and declare the most important truths of the gospel, if those unto whom they are proposed do not diligently inquire into them, and duly ponder and consider of them. The Hebrews are here called upon to consider: But what? and whom? Why, who Melchizedek was, and how great a man he was. Note here, That the greatness of Melchizedek did not respect either the endowments of his person, or the largeness of his dominion, or his riches and wealth, (in which sense some are said to be great in scripture.) But he is pronounced *great* with respect to his office, and in regard to his nearness to God on that account, as also in his representing our Lord Jesus Christ. Observe farther, The proof here given of the greatness of Melchizedek, in that no meaner a person than Abraham, than Abraham the patriarch, did give the tenth part of the spoils unto him. Here remark, that notwithstanding the highest advantages and privileges which Abraham was possessed of, which rendered him almost adored by his posterity, yet when the meanest duty was presented to him, he readily complied with it. The highest privileges neither can nor ought to exempt any person from the performance of the meanest duty. Duty is our highest honour and chiefest advantage; but privileges, promotions, dignities, and exaltations, may become snares, and end in the ruin of men's souls. When a person is dignified and advanced in the church, if thereby he thinks himself exempted from the ordinary service of the ministry, he is guilty of horrid pride and ingratitude; but if he farther indulge himself in a course of idleness, sloth, sensuality, and worldliness, these are crimes unpardonable, and want a name to express them.

5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: 6 But he, whose descent is not counted from them, received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. 7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

Still the apostle goes on to give Melchizedek the preference above Abraham, and from thence to infer, that Christ, whom

Melchizedek typified, was much more excellent than Abraham, and all the Levitical priests which sprang from him. The argument lies thus: "The law allowed Aaron and the other priests to take tithes of their brethren that sprang from Abraham: but Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham, who was none of his people, yea, and blessed Abraham also, which is a demonstration that he was greater than Abraham; and consequently it is evident, that Christ is greater than the Jewish priests: to bless authoritatively is an act of superiority; now Melchizedek blessed Abraham, he is therefore greater than Abraham; because he that blessed is greater than he whom he blesseth." Behold here the excellency of the office of God's ministers, namely, to bless the people in God's name: they bless authoritatively, and bless declaratively, they bless optatively. God help them to take heed, lest by their miscarriages they prove a snare and a curse unto them whom they ought to bless.

8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he *receiveth them*, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

Our apostle still carrieth on the same argument, proving Melchizedek's priesthood to surpass and excel the Aaronical and Levitical priesthood, in the immortality of it: as the less is blessed of the greater, so is that which is immortal greater and better than what is mortal; but such is Melchizedek and his order of priesthood. Indeed in the Levitical order of priesthood, though the priests be superior to the people, and take tithes of them, yet they do die as well as the people: But we read not a word of Melchizedek's death, he is a priest for ever; that is, he did typically prefigure Christ, who doth properly and indeed live for ever. Melchizedek ever lives *secundum historiam*, Christ *secundum veritatem*. Learn hence, That the life of the church depends upon the everlasting life of Jesus Christ: he liveth for ever, when ministers die or have their mouths stopped. This great High-priest lives, upon whom the life and preservation, the continuance and salvation, of the church does depend: *Here men die that receive tithes*. Note, *from their mortality*, That in the outward administration of God's worship, he is pleased to make use of the ministry of frail, mortal, and dying men. Zach. i. 5. *The prophets, do they live for ever?* Hereby it does evidently appear, that it is the power of God, and nothing else, which

gives efficacy and success to all gospel-administrations, 2 Cor. iv. 7. *We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. 10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him.

By Levi here we are to understand the Levites, or the Levitical priesthood; they being in Abraham's loins, are said to pay tithes in Abraham to Melchizedek, which the apostle produces as an evidence, that Melchizedek is superior to the Levites, and greater than they; and consequently that Christ, whom Melchizedek did typify, must needs be more excellent than they also. The argument runs thus: "They who receive tithes of others, are certainly superior to them of whom they do receive them; but Melchizedek received tithes of Abraham, and of Levi in Abraham's loins; therefore he is superior to them, and of a more excellent order than they: which is the great truth he had been so industriously proving."

11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what farther need *was there* that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron? 12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

If *perfection*, that is, a perfect expiation and remission of sin, could have been made by the sacrifice which the legal priests offered, there should then have been no need that God should institute a priest of another and more excellent order, namely, his own Son, to be a priest after Melchizedek's order, and not after the order of Aaron. Where note, That perfection is denied the Levitical priesthood, and ascribed to the priesthood of Christ. To perfect sinful man, is to free him from the guilt of sin, and from the dreadful and dismal consequences of sin, and to make him righteous and holy, capable of communion with God, both here and hereafter. Now this the Levitical priesthood could not do. *But Jesus Christ has by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified*, chap. x. 14. Thus the apostle infers the necessity of changing the priesthood: and next, he tells

us, verse 12, That the change of the Levitical priesthood necessarily draweth along with it a change of the Levitical law, and the legal dispensation of the covenant of grace; for the Levitical priesthood and the Levitical law do both stand and fall together: *The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.* By the changing of the priesthood, understand the abolition of it; by the change of the law, understand the abrogation of it; by the word *necessity*, understand that the change was not casual and contingent, but absolutely needful, in regard of the imperfection and inability of the Levitical priesthood to effect any such thing. Learn hence, That the promulgation of the gospel, and the institution of Christianity, did abrogate the Levitical law, and made it of no force. This might be the reason why God did not only by the death and sacrifice of Christ, the great High-priest, abolish the Levitical priesthood, but also destroyed the temple itself, where he had put his name, and never suffered it to be re-built; denoting thereby the utter abolition of the Levitical priesthood, and the total abrogation of the ceremonial law.

13 For he of whom these things are spoken, pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar, 14 For it is evident, that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood,

In the foregoing verses, our apostle had asserted the change of the priesthood, and therewith the changing of the law. In these verses he proves it by the translation of the priesthood to another tribe, namely, from Levi to Judah. The Levitical priesthood was confined to one certain tribe, that of Levi, and to one certain family, that of Aaron: whence it follows, that the tribe being changed, and God having instituted a priest of another tribe, the priesthood must be changed also. Now it being evident, that Christ sprang not of the tribe of Levi, but out of Judah, the apostle, from the changing of the tribe, strongly infers the change of the priesthood. Note here, 1. How it was a fruit of the manifold wisdom of God, and a very great mercy and favour, to give the law, but a far greater to take it away. 2. If under the law, the whole worship of God did so depend on the priesthood, that that failing, the whole worship was to cease, as being no more acceptable to God, how much more will all worship under the New Testament be rejected by him, if there be not a due

regard therein to our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great and only High-priest of his church.

15 And it is yet far more evident : for that after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, 16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. 17 For he testifieth, *Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*

The Aaronical priesthood was to be changed, and consequently the whole law of ordinances that depended thereupon, and that the time was now come wherein this change was to be made, is the grand truth which our apostle here designs the confirmation of; it being indeed that truth whereinto our faith of the acceptance of evangelical worship is resolved: and accordingly he gives a farther proof of the change of the priesthood from the different manner of the priest's consecration. Thus the Levitical priest was set apart to his office by a number of carnal rites and outward ceremonies, which the law prescribed to be used at the consecration of Aaron and his sons, who were purified with water, anointed with oil, sprinkled with blood, clothed with priestly vestments, initiated with sacrifices, administered in an earthly tabernacle and temple. But, says our apostle, the evangelical or gospel High-priest, Christ Jesus, was not constituted thus, or made a priest with such carnal rites and outward ceremonies, but *with the power of an endless life*; that is, he was consecrated a priest by the power of the Holy Ghost, having an immortal life suitable to his priesthood, and authority to give eternal life to as many as depend upon the benefit of his sacrifice and satisfaction: *He was made, not after the law of carnal commandment, (with corporal ceremony and carnal duration, but after the spiritual power of an endless life.* Learn hence, That all the outward ceremony which seemed to be wanting unto Christ, in his entrance into his priestly office, was on account of his greater glory. Aaron was made a priest with great outward solemnity, Christ with none at all; yet all Aaron's ceremonial glory was nothing, in comparison of that excellent glory which accompanied those invisible acts of divine authority, wisdom, and grace, which communicated Christ's office unto him.

18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness

thereof. 19 For the law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope *did*; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

Now the apostle comes to declare, that the Levitical priesthood being abolished, and the ceremonial law abrogated, the whole state of the church, and the solemn worship of God therein, must necessarily be changed also. This he foresaw would be a mighty surprisal to the generality of the Hebrews, to hear that they must quit all their concern and special interest in the law of Moses; and therefore he assigns a double reason for the abrogation and disannulling of that law; namely, the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, ver. 18. *There is a disannulling of the commandment, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.* Not that the law was weak in itself, or unprofitable to the end for which God made it, namely, to lead them to Christ; but weak and unprofitable for justification and salvation. They expected expiation of sin, sanctification, and holiness by it, without any regard to Christ and his sacrifice, by whom alone it could be obtained. These things the law could not affect in its best estate; how vain was it then for the Jews to expect them when it was abolished! Observe next, How the apostle proves the law to be weak and unprofitable; namely, because *it made nothing perfect.* The law, that is, the whole system of Mosaical ordinances, the legal covenant, *made nothing perfect*; that is, no person, how strictly soever he observed, could be justified and saved by it, it could not of itself cleanse from sin, reconcile us to God, justify our persons, sanctify our natures, and procure salvation for us. Observe lastly, Though the ceremonial law made nothing perfect, yet the gospel law, called here a *better hope*, because the promises of it are a good ground of hope, has efficacy, power, and virtue, to do all those things for us, and by it we have freedom of access to God. *The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope, whereby we draw nigh to God.* Learn hence, 1. That the law could not justify or sanctify any person, nor make him perfect, by reconciling him to God, and procuring salvation for him. Learn, 2. That believers of old, who lived under the law, did not live upon the law, but upon the hope of Christ, or Christ hoped for; could justification and salvation have been had any other way, or by any other means, Christ's coming had been needless, and his death in vain. Learn, 3. That the introduction of a better hope by the gospel, after a suffi-

cient discovery made of the weakness and insufficiency of the law, did make all things perfect, or bring the church to that state of consummation, which was designed unto it. Learn, 4. That when all mankind were at an inconceivable distance from God, it was infinite condescension of grace to appoint his own Son, who was the blessed hope of the saints under the Old Testament, to be the only way and mean of our approaching unto him. When *the law made nothing perfect, the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh unto God.*

20 And inasmuch as not without an oath *he was made priest*, 21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath, by him that said unto him, The Lord swear, and will not repent, *Thou art a priest for ever*, after the order of Melchizedek :) 22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

Our apostle has not yet done with his several arguments to prove the transcendent excellency of Christ's priesthood above that of Aaron's; his argument in the verses now before us lies thus: He that is made an unchangeable priest by the oath of God, is a better, greater, and more excellent priest, than any made so without it. But whereas the Levitical priests were made without an oath, by a law changeable at the will of the lawgiver; Jesus Christ was made a priest by the unchangeable oath of God. *The Lord swear, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever.* Learn hence, That nothing was wanting on the part of God, that might either give eminency and glory, or stability and efficacy, to the priesthood of Christ: this was both due to the glory of his person, and also needful to encourage and secure the faith of the church. Learn, 3. That Jesus Christ our great High-priest, being initiated into his office by the oath of God, his priesthood is liable to no alteration, succession, or substitution: But the church may continually draw nigh to God, in full assurance of his meritorious satisfaction and prevailing intercession, and receive from thence a solid foundation of peace and consolation: *By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.* Observe here, 1. The title given the gospel covenant; it is here called a better testament: better, not for substance, but for clearness; for substance, the old covenant dispensation and the new are the same; but the latter is made more clear, more free, more full, more surely ratified, by the death of Christ,

and accompanied with a more mighty operation of the Spirit of God. Observe, 2. The title here given to Christ; he is the *surety of a better testament.* Our surety, because our sacrifice. The Socinians own Christ to be the surety of the covenant, in respect of his holy life and exemplary death, sealing it as a testimony by his blood; but deny him to be a surety in respect of his satisfaction, merit, and intercession. But alas! as our sinful condition requires a mediator of redemption, so our changeable condition requires a mediator of intercession: and, blessed be God, he has appointed one for both, even his own and only Son, who is the surety of a better testament. Learn thence, That the Lord Jesus was not only made a surety on God's part to us, to assure us that the promise of the covenant on his part should be performed, but was also a surety on our part, to furnish us with that grace and assistance which shall enable us to do, answer, and perform, all that is required on our part, that we may enjoy the benefit of the covenant, grace here, and glory hereafter. Christ has undertaken as surety of the covenant, first, to satisfy for sin, by offering himself as a propitiatory sacrifice; and next, to furnish forth such a sufficiency of grace to enable for the fulfilling the conditions of the gospel covenant. Thus was Jesus *the surety of this better covenant.*

23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: 24 But this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

Now our apostle is come to his last argument, by which he proves the excellency of Christ's priesthood above that of Aaron. The Levitical priests, he says, were many and mortal; their mortality was the cause of their multitude: they were cut off by death, and succeeded one another; but Christ is the one and the same to his church, *yesterday, to-day, and for ever*; he had no partner, has no successor, but executes an everlasting unchangeable priesthood in his own person. Note here, 1. That the multiplication of priests, particularly of high-priests, under the legal dispensation, was a manifest evidence of the imperfection of it; from Aaron the first high-priest, unto Phineas the last, who was destroyed with the temple, are reckoned fourscore and three high-priests who succeeded one another; of these, thirteen are said to live under the tabernacle, eighteen

under the first temple built by Solomon, and all the rest under the second temple; the ground of which multiplication of priests was this, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. Learn 1. That the priesthood of Christ, as unchangeably exercised in his own person, is perpetual: and its perpetuity is a principal part of the glory of that office. *He continueth for ever, having an unchangeable priesthood.* Quest. But did not Christ, our great High-priest, die as well as Aaron, and other high-priests? Ans. Yes, he died as a priest, they died from being priests; he died as a priest, because he was also to be a sacrifice. The apostle doth not say, that he did not die, but that he always abideth; he abode a priest even in the state of death, and after his resurrection he became immortal, never to die more; he ever liveth, he dieth no more. Death has no more dominion over him. See how he describes himself, Rev. i. 18. *I am he that liveth, and was dead: and behold I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and death.*

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

These words are a comfortable inference and conclusion, which our apostle draws from his preceding discourse concerning the eternity and unchangeableness of Christ's priesthood; seeing he lives for ever, he is therefore able to save to the uttermost, and that for ever. Observe here, 1. The complete power and ability of Jesus Christ to save sinners asserted; *He is able to save, and that to the uttermost:* that is, completely and everlastingly. Learn hence, That whatever difficulties lie in the way of salvation, and whatever oppositions do rise against it, either with respect to the guilt of sin, or to the power and dominion of it, the Lord Jesus Christ is able, by virtue of his sacerdotal office, and in the exercise of it, to carry on the work through them all unto eternal perfection! such is the dignity of his person, such is the sufficiency of the satisfaction, that he expiates the guilt of sin universally and perpetually. Observe, 2. The character and description given of the persons whom Jesus Christ thus perfectly and eternally saves: *such as come unto God by him;* those, all those, and only those, whom God will save, are such as come unto him for salvation by and through our Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator. Oh, how injurious then are they to their own souls, who sit down desponding, either

under the guilt or under the power of their sins, and conclude them either so great that they cannot be pardoned, or so strong that they can never be vanquished or overcome! Observe, 3. The reason of this power and ability in Christ to save sinners to the uttermost assigned: and that is, the eternity of his priesthood, the perpetuity and prevalence of his intercession: *Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* Here note, 1. The state and condition of Christ as an high-priest, He ever liveth. He is always living in heaven a threefold life. 1. The eternal life of God in his divine nature; this he liveth in himself. 2. A life of inconceivable glory in his human nature: this is a life which he liveth for himself. 3. A mediatory life in heaven; and this he lives for us. Note, 2. What he doth as an high-priest in that state and condition, *He maketh intercession for us.* Learn, That the Lord Jesus Christ ever liveth to make intercession with his Father in heaven, on the behalf of all penitent believers here on earth. We are not to conceive of Christ as an intercessor with his Father in heaven, in such an humble supplicating manner as when here upon earth, with knees bended down, and eyes lifted up to heaven; this is inconsistent with his glorified state. But it is such a pleading and petitioning with his Father, as is in the nature of a claim and demand; and it is such a claim and demand made to his Father, as is accompanied with the presenting the memorials of his death unto him. Christ need not use his mouth to plead with his Father in heaven; the bare showing of his wounded body pleads prevalently and perpetually, and this intercession of Christ is a standing evidence of the continuance of his love and care, his pity and compassion to us. Blessed be God that our great High-priest, who suffered for us, ever liveth in heaven to make intercession for us.

26 For such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

Observe here, 1. Something supposed, and necessarily implied, namely, That if we intend to come unto God, we had need of an high-priest to encourage and enable us thereunto: *Such an high-priest became us;* implying, that without an high-priest in general, we can do nothing in this matter. Observe, 2. The care and kindness of God in providing for us, not only an high-priest, but such an high-priest as our condition required, one that has made atonement for

us, procured acceptance, given us assistance, preserved us in grace, and will preserve us unto glory: behold the infinite wisdom, love, grace, and goodness of God, in giving such an high-priest, as in the qualification of his person, the glory of his condition, and the discharge of his office, was every way suited to deliver us from a state of apostasy, sin, and misery, and to bring us to himself through a perfect salvation. Observe, 2. The double character given of this high-priest in his purity. 1. *He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.* Thus he was in his conception, birth, life, and death, never tainted or stained with the least sin, but both habitually and actually more pure and holy than any priest on earth, or angel in heaven. 2. In his dignity, *He is made higher than the heavens;* advanced above all the inhabitants of that glorious place, where he ever liveth, and keeps his residence; remaining a priest for ever, not to sacrifice, but to apply effectually his former sacrifice to all believers.

27 Who needeth not daily as those high-priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the people's. For this he did once, when he offered up himself.

That is, "As Jesus Christ, our great High-priest, had no sin of his own to expiate, like other high-priests, but his business was to offer for our sins; so the oblation and offering he made, upon that account, was not bullocks or rams, but *himself*, in sacrifice, and that once, and but once, upon the cross, which *once* offered sacrifice was abundantly sufficient to take away sin; whereas other high-priests offered for their own sins, and for the people's sins, and that often, which was a token of their insufficiency and imperfection." Learn hence, 1. That no sacrifice could bring us to God, and save us to perfection, but that wherein the Son of God himself was both priest and offering; such an high-priest became us, who offered himself once for all. Learn, 2. That the perfection of Christ's sacrifice makes the repetition of it needless, and the often repeating of it would argue the imperfection both of priest and sacrifice: *He needeth not daily to offer up sacrifice, for this he did once, when he offered up himself.*

28 For the law maketh men high-priests which have infirmity: but the word of the oath, which was since the law, *maketh* the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

That is, the Levitical law appointed men to be high-priests that laboured under infirmities, were sinners, and subject to mortality; but the promise made to Christ, and confirmed by God's oath long since the law was given, maketh the Son, and none but the Son, (who is perfectly holy and consecrated to this everlasting office,) a priest *for evermore*. Learn hence, 1. That there never was any more than two sorts of priests in the church; the one made by the law, the other by the oath of God. Learn, 2. That the great foundation of our faith, and the main hinge whereon all our consolation depends, is this, that our high-priest is the Son of God, and his everlasting continuance in his office is secured by the oath of God.

CHAP. VIII.

Our apostle having proved the excellency of Christ's priesthood in the former chapter; he proceeds in this to show his faithful execution of that his priestly office, for the good and benefit of his church; proving by sundry arguments, that his ministry, as our great High-priest, is to be preferred before the Levitical administration: partly with respect to the place where he ministers, which is heaven: partly in respect to the sacrifice which he presents in heaven, his body, his humanity, in which he suffered; and partly with respect to that new and better covenant, whereof he is Mediator. Concerning which he thus speaks particularly in the chapter before us.

NOW of the things which we have spoken *this is the sum*: We have such an high-priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; 2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's preface, in which he doth briefly recapitulate the sum and substance of his preceding arguments, *Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum.* Learn hence, That when doctrines are important, and the matters treated of very weighty and momentous, we should endeavour by all means to make an impression of them upon the minds of our hearers, by a brief recapitulation of the things we have insisted on; thus doth our apostle here. Observe, 2. A declaration of the first general pre-eminence of our high-priest, and that is taken from his present state and eternal condition, *He is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.* A throne, a sceptre, a crown, are ensigns of majesty and ornaments of sovereign power; to sit in the throne, is to possess sovereign power and dominion: this Christ now

enjoys in heaven, as the reward of his deep humiliation, and as the highest degree of his exaltation. Learn hence, That the principal glory of the priestly office of Christ depends on the glorious exaltation of his person. Observe, 3. Another pre-eminence of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our great high-priest; he is called a minister of the sanctuary. *A minister*; this intimates to us, that our great high-priest, in the height of his glory, condescends to discharge the office of a public minister in the behalf of his church. Our thoughts sometimes dwell upon what Christ did for us on earth; but too seldom are they taken up with the contemplation of what he is still doing for us in heaven. And a *minister of the sanctuary, or true tabernacle*: that is, not of the literal sanctuary and tabernacle here below, for Christ never entered into that, but of the sanctuary of heaven, in which dwelleth all that was represented in the sanctuary here below: Christ our great high-priest abides in the sanctuary of heaven for us continually; always representing the efficacy of that blood whereby atonement was made for all our sins. O blessed Jesus! thy being continually in heaven, will draw our hearts and minds continually thither, if so be we are really interested in thy holy ministration.

3 For every high-priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. 4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: 5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, (saith he,) *that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

That the Lord Jesus Christ is our great High-priest under the gospel, the apostle had sufficiently demonstrated and confirmed before. Observe here, How he next declares what is the nature, duty, and office of Christ, as our high-priest; namely, *to offer gifts and sacrifices*. A priest that has nothing to offer is no priest at all; Christ therefore offered as well as other high-priests; but what? bullocks and rams? in no wise: he offered himself, his whole human nature, soul and body. As to the typical sacrifices, he did not, could not, offer them, were he upon earth, because

he was not of the tribe of Levi, whose proper office it was to meddle with those offerings; therefore, leaving the shadow to them, he offered the substance, himself; that is, his own body, signified by those shadows. Learn hence, That there was no salvation to be had for us, no, not by Jesus Christ himself, without his sacrifice and oblation: *It was of necessity that he should have somewhat to offer*, as well as those priests had of old, according to the law. No salvation without atonement for sin; no atonement for sin but by sacrifice; no sacrifice sufficient for atonement but the death of Christ; and whoever looks for salvation otherwise than in the faith and virtue of that sacrifice, will be disappointed and deceived. But although the oblation was made by Christ on earth, yet the continual application of its efficacy to the souls of believers, is made by Christ now in heaven; without which, neither their access to God, nor their peace with God, could be maintained, ver. 3, 4. In the fifth verse the apostle asserts, that the Levitical priests here below did perform those administrations, which were but shadows of heavenly things above. *Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things*. Where to serve, is to officiate as priests, in offering gifts and sacrifices: but this their service was not spiritual and heavenly, but carnal and earthly; yet a shadow and imitation of heavenly things. Learn hence, That God alone limits the significations and use of all his own institutions. The ministry of the priests of old was only in and about earthly things, not heavenly things, yet have a resemblance and shadow of heavenly things. We must not take any thing out of God's institutions which he has put in them, nor must we put more in them than God has furnished them withal. To expect that from any ordinance or institution of God which he never intended or designed, is to make an idol of the ordinance, and the way to render it useless, yea, pernicious and perilous to us; to put that into an ordinance which God never put into it, and to expect more from an ordinance than God ever promised, is to overthrow it.

—As Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, (saith he,) *that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

The words imply, that divine institution is the only pure rule of religious worship: Moses did nothing of his own head when he built the tabernacle, but had his direc-

tions in every thing from God. If persons will carve out the worship of God according to their own fancies they may please themselves perhaps, but they never can please their Maker; for nothing is pleasing to God, as to the substance of religious worship, but what is of his own prescribing; consequently all that theatrical pomp which is found in the church of Rome, and makes the worship of God a dead thing, is a mere fornication in religion, and an abomination in the sight of God. All their human inventions are intolerable presumptions. And as Moses was bound to give directions according to the pattern given him, so the priests in their administrations were bound to follow Moses' directions. Yet after all, the things which Moses was concerned about were carnal things; the tabernacle was earthly, the offerings carnal, yet shadows of better things, even of heavenly; for the sanctuary was a shadow of a heavenly sanctuary, the priest of a better priest, the service of a far better service. This seems to be the intention of our apostle.

6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. *

Our apostle, in these words, proves the excellency of Christ's ministry or priesthood above that of Aaron and his sons, from the excellency of the new covenant (or the new dispensation of the covenant of grace) above the old, of which he was the Mediator. Now the more excellent the covenant, the more excellent the ministry. Learn hence, 1. That the gospel covenant, or the new covenant, was the best covenant that ever God made with man: not but that the old and new covenant were the same for substance, though not for clearness; indeed temporal things were types and shadows of better things, even of heavenly: and accordingly believers under the Old Testament were saved by a covenant of grace as well as we. Learn, 2. That the gospel covenant is therefore a better covenant, because established upon better promises; their promises of old were chiefly temporal, though not only temporal promises. Ours are chiefly spiritual, yet are temporal things promised us also; but more rarely, and with the exception of the cross, or rather they are thrown in as additions to spiritual promises, *Matt. vi. 33.* But the promises of the covenant of grace are therefore better, because strength and assistance is engaged for, and

graciously offered, in order to enable us to perform the conditions of them. The law required sinless obedience; the gospel accepts sincere obedience, and offers grace to perform it. Learn, 3. That Jesus Christ is the Mediator of this better covenant. As there was a covenant made between God and man, so there was need of a mediator, that the covenant might be effectual; for a mediator is necessary both where there is a controversy and difference, and also where there is an imparity and distance between persons: in both respects Christ is mediator; and his mediation was needful, that he might bring us to God. God stood upon terms before he would pardon sin. Justice must be satisfied, and that by blood, and that blood of infinite value; therefore Christ is first a sponsor before a mediator; he first satisfies for the breach, before he goes about to make up the breach between God and the sinner. Thus was he the mediator of a better covenant.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt: because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

Observe here, 1. What is charged on the first covenant, and that is, faultiness. By which we are not to understand any sinful faultiness, but defectiveness and imperfection only: for it was not faulty in the matter and substance of it, as it was instituted and ordained by God, but therefore called faulty because it was obscure, was not so surely ratified, and not attended with that virtue, power, and efficacy, which the new covenant is accompanied with. Observe, 2. Wherein consisteth the defectiveness and imperfection of the first covenant which is here complained of, namely, 1. In its inability to justify and save us, because of our inability, through the weakness of the flesh, to answer the demands of it, *Rom. iii. 3.* *What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the flesh, &c.* The law was not properly weak to us, but we were weak to that. 2. The legal covenant required exact obedience, but afforded no

spiritual assistance for the performance of what it required. But the covenant of grace, the new covenant, is called a *ministration of the spirit*; and under the gospel we are said not to serve in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit. Now, says the apostle, ver. 3. Almighty God finding fault with the Jews for the breach of the former covenant, declared by the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xxxi. 31. That the covenant he would make with all true Israelites for time to come, should not be like that which he made with their fathers in Egypt, which they continued not in the observation of, (wanting those assistances from the Holy Spirit to enable them thereunto, which are procured for us by Christ;) accordingly *I regarded them not, saith the Lord*, but gave them up for their sins into the hands of their enemies. Observe, lastly, How Almighty God makes the imperfection of the old covenant, and the Israelites' instability therein, the reason of his making a new covenant with us, in which grace and assistance is offered, to enable us to obey and persevere in obedience: *Finding fault with them*; that is, for the breach of the former, he saith, *Behold the days come, that I will make a covenant with them*. From the whole note, 1. That the grace and glory of the new covenant are much set off and manifested by comparing it with the old. Note, 2. That nothing but effectual grace from Christ will secure our covenant obedience one moment. What greater motives, or stronger outward obligations to obedience, could any people under heaven have than the Israelites had? But they quickly turned out of the way: therefore in the new covenant is this grace promised in a peculiar manner, as we shall see in the next verse.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

Observe here, 1. The persons with whom this covenant is made: the house of Israel, and the house of Judah; not made with them as a political body, because their policy was to be dissolved, but as a part of the universal church. Observe, 2. The author of this covenant; and that is God himself; *I will make it, saith the Lord*. Note, That the abolishing of the old covenant, and establishing the new, is an act of sovereign wisdom, grace, and authority, in God: *I will make a new covenant*. Observe,

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8. What is the great and comprehensive promise of the new covenant: *I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts*; that is, 1. I will make a clear and perspicuous revelation of my mind and will unto them, and give them a thorough knowledge and understanding of my laws, so that their own consciences shall condemn them when they do transgress them. And, 2. By my Holy Spirit I will make a deep and efficacious impression of them upon their hearts and spirits. Where note, That the precepts of the old covenant are all of them turned into promises under the new; their preceptive and commanding power remaineth, but grace is promised for the performance of them. Note, farther, That the work of grace in the new covenant passeth on the whole soul in all its powers and faculties, to their change and renovation: *I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts*. And consequently, to deny the necessity and efficacy of the sanctifying and renewing grace of God in the habits and acts of it, is plainly to overthrow the evangelical covenant. Observe, 4. What is the relation which is here said to ensue between God and his people: *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people*. Note here, 1. God's relation to us; *I will be to them a God*. I who am all-sufficient in myself, will be your all-sufficient Preserver, and your all-sufficient Rewarder. As nothing less than God's becoming our God can relieve and help us: so nothing more can be required thereof. Note, 2. Our relation to God, *They shall be to me a people*; that is, a special, and peculiar people, owing dependency upon him, and professing all subjection and obedience to him. And observe, God undertakes for this, *They shall be to me a people*. Learn thence, That God doth as well undertake for our being his people, as he doth for his being our God: he that assumes them into that relation freely, will preserve them in it powerfully: *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people*.

11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to greatest.

These words are not to be understood absolutely, but comparatively; they are a promise that under the new covenant dispensation the Holy Spirit shall be so plentifully poured forth, and the light of the gospel so clearly shine forth, that there shall not be such need as under the law, to teach men the knowledge of God, and their

duty to him; they shall not need in such a manner as formerly to instruct one another in the meaning of the types and shadows of the law. *They shall all know me*; that is, all ranks and degrees of men, all sorts and conditions of persons shall own me to be the Lord. Note here, What abuse is put upon this text by some, who bring it to set aside the necessity of human teaching; for it is by such teaching that God gives man the knowledge of himself. Learn hence, That there is a duty incumbent on every man to instruct others, according to his ability and opportunity, in the knowledge of God. But, Lord pity us, we have more that mutually teach one another sin, folly, vanity, yea, villany of all sorts, than the knowledge of God, and the duty we owe unto him! This is not what God here promiseth believers in a way of grace, but what he hath given up careless, unbelieving professors to, in a way of vengeance.

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

This is the great fundamental promise of the covenant of grace,—pardon of sin. Thence learn, That free and deserved grace in the pardon of sin is the original spring and foundation of all covenant mercies and blessings. Observe farther, how copiously the Spirit of God sets forth the benefits of pardoning grace: I will forgive and forget; *I will be merciful, and remember no more*. Pardoning mercy is full, as well as free. Observe, lastly, The aggravating names here given to sin: it is called *unrighteousness*, because nothing can be more unequal and unjust, than for man to sin against God his creator, his ruler, and benefactor; and *iniquity*, or transgression of the law, an erring and swerving from the rule of holiness, which we are to walk by. Learn hence, 1. That the aggravations of sin are great and many, which the consciences of convinced sinners ought to have regard unto. Learn, 2. That we can never understand aright the glory and excellency of pardoning mercy, unless we are convinced of the greatness and vileness of our sins in these several aggravations of them. Learn, 3. That the covenant of grace fully assures us, that there are riches of grace, and abundance of pardoning mercy in God, which disposes him, for Christ's sake, to be merciful to penitent sinners' unrighteousness, and to remember their transgressions no more, how many and heinous soever they have been.

13 In that he saith, A new covenant,

he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

The apostle having, in the foregoing verses, proved the insufficiency of the old covenant, and the necessity of the new, and given the preference to the latter above the former; in this last verse he acquaints us with the abrogation of the old covenant, *it is made old*; and with the abolition of it, *it is ready to vanish away*: as old things lose their power, strength, and vigour, so the old covenant lost its binding power and obliging force. And as that which waxeth old moulders away by little and little, till at last it does totally vanish, and utterly perish; thus the legal dispensation by little and little decayed, until it wholly ceased at last; yea, it is observable, that the whole policy and Jewish government did vanish away and totally expire in a few years after the writing of this epistle. Learn hence, 1. That the outward appearance of the legal administration was glorious, and very taking to the Jews: the fabric of the temple, the ornaments of the priests, the order of their worship, had a glory in them which dazzled the eyes, and captivated the minds and affections, of the people. Learn, 2. That all this glory did gradually vanish, and at last totally disappear; all the glorious institutions of the law were at best but as stars in the firmament of the church, and consequently were all to disappear at the rising of the Sun of righteousness: *In that he saith a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away*.

CHAP. IX.

Our apostle having, in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, asserted that the old covenant made with the church at Sinai, with all the ordinances of worship and privileges thereto belonging, was taken away and ceased; and well knowing how hard and difficult it would be to persuade the Hebrews to forego those things which they were so exceedingly fond of, they looking upon them to be (as indeed they were) of God's own appointment, and expected all their happiness to depend upon a strict observation of them, and a firm adherence to them; he comes in this chapter to make a comparison between the old and new covenant, between the legal and the evangelical dispensation, showing that the former was to cease, and that it was greatly to the church's advantage that it should do so, yea, absolutely necessary, that it might be brought unto that state of perfection it was designed unto: and accordingly thus he speaks, ver. 1.

THEN verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

In this and the following verses, the

apostle gives us a particular and distinct view of the typical ordinances, in the old covenant under the Mosaic dispensation, and also of their accomplishment in Jesus Christ: and here in general he acquaints us, that the first covenant had an outward legal service, with sundry rites and ordinances of divine worship, and a worldly sanctuary raised by men, of earthly materials, a temporary tabernacle: *Verily the first covenant had ordinances of divine service, &c.* Observe here, That there never was any covenant between God and man, but it had some ordinances and institutions of divine worship annexed unto it; the original covenant of works and the ordinances of the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The covenant of Sinai, whereof the apostle here speaks, had a multitude of them, and the gospel covenant is not destitute of them; witness our sacraments and public worship. Observe, 2. That all ordinances for worship must be resolved into divine ordination or institution, as that which renders them acceptable and well-pleasing unto God; a worship not ordained by God is not acceptable to God: it had ordinances of worship. Observe, lastly, How God can animate outward carnal things with an hidden invisible spring of glory and efficacy. So he did their sanctuary with its relation unto Christ, which was an object of faith, which no eye of flesh could behold.

2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first wherein *was* the candlestick, and the table, and the show-bread: which is called the Sanctuary. 3 And, after the second veil, the tabernacle, which is called the Holiest of all; 4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

In these verses, the Holy Ghost by the apostle sets before our eyes the beautiful face of God's public worship, under the ceremonial law. And, first, he describes the place appointed by God for his solemn worship. This was, first, the tabernacle; then, the temple: the tabernacle was an ambulatory temple; the temple a standing tabernacle. The tabernacle was a type and figure of Christ's incarnation, where- by the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in

him bodily, as it dwelt typically in the tabernacle; this tabernacle had two parts, the sanctuary or holy place, and the *sanctum sanctorum*, or the *holy of holies*. Our apostle tells us what sacred utensils were by God's appointment in both these places.

1. In the sanctuary there was the *candlestick*, representing that fulness of light which is in Christ, and which is by him communicated to the whole church. The *table*, whereon stood the *show-bread*, typifying the saints' communion with Christ, and with one another; also the *show-bread* itself, which typified Christ, as being the only bread of life to his church, the only spiritual food of the soul that nourishes it unto life eternal. 2. In the holy of holies there was the *golden censer*, which was to hold the incense. This represented the intercession of Christ, which gives efficacy to the prayers of all believers: the prevalency of all our prayers depends on the incense which is in the hand of our merciful High-priest. The *ark of the covenant overlaid with gold*; this, with the *mercy-seat*, which covered the ark, was the most glorious and mysterious utensil of the tabernacle, the most eminent pledge of the divine presence; called the ark of the covenant, because the tables, in which the ten commandments were writ by the finger of God, were kept in it; next the *golden pot*, in which the *manna* was laid up, and miraculously kept from putrefaction, (which of itself would have stunk in a few days,) a type of Christ the bread of life. Then *Aaron's rod that budded*; this originally was the rod of Moses, wherewith he fed his sheep in the wilderness, and afterwards wrought his miracles, and particularly smote the rock with it till it gushed out water. When Aaron was called to the office of the priesthood, it was delivered unto his keeping. This rod of Moses, wherewith he smote the rock, is commanded to be laid up in the tabernacle, because the spiritual rock that followed them was to be smitten with the rod of the law, that it might give forth the waters of life unto the church. Last of all, *the tables of the covenant*; that is, the two tables of stone, cut out by Moses, and written on with the finger of God, containing the ten commandments, which were the substance of God's covenant with the people. These two tables of stone were, by the express command of God, put into the ark, and there was nothing else in the ark but them. The pot of manna, and Aaron's rod, were laid up in the holy of holies, near the ark, but not in it, which were of no actual use in the service of God, but only kept as sacred memorials. Having thus described

what was in the ark, next the apostle tells us what was over the ark, namely, the cherubims and the mercy-seat. The cherubims were *alata animalia*, winged creatures of human shape, but with wings to denote their angelical nature; there were two of them, one on each end of the ark, shadowing the mercy-seat; from between these cherubims over the mercy-seat it was that God manifested his majestic presence, spake unto Moses, and gave out his oracles as a prince speaks from a throne. The *mercy-seat* was of pure beaten gold, the measure of it exactly answering the ark: this covered the ark, wherein the law was; and was a type of Christ, who fully covers our sins, the transgression of the law, out of God's sight; and is therefore called by the apostle, *Rom. iii. 25.* our propitiatory, or propitiation, or *mercy-seat*. *For if thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, according to the law, who could stand?* These are the particular things which the apostle thought fit to take notice of, in the Jewish tabernacle; all which we see pointed at Christ; and there was in them all, more or less, a representation of the person and mediation of Christ. Hereunto were they designed by divine wisdom, to denote that in him alone is God well pleased, in him alone will he be glorified.

6 Now, when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. 7 But into the second *went* the high-priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. 8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, That the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing; 9 Which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; 10 Which *stood* only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

Our apostle having given an account in the preceding verses of the structure or fabric of the tabernacle, in the two parts of it which belonged to the priests; namely, the holy place, and the holy of holies, (for of the first court, the court of the peo-

ple, he says nothing;) he comes now to discourse of the service, which by the appointment of God the priests were to perform in this magnificent structure.

6 Now, when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God:

Where observe, 1. The persons administering, the priests only, and they of the posterity of Aaron: all others were forbidden upon pain of excision. Observe, 2. The general foundation of the service of these priests in the sanctuary, *They entered* into it, but were to go no farther; they must not so much as look unto the holy of holies, no, nor yet abide in the sanctuary when the high-priest entered into the most holy place. Observe, 3. The time of this their entrance into the sanctuary to discharge their service, *always*; that is, every day, and at all times, as occasion did require. Observe, 4. The service itself, *accomplishing the service of God*; these services were either daily or weekly; daily, were dressing the lamps, supplying them with holy oil morning and evening; also the service of the golden altar, in which the priest burnt incense every day. The weekly service of the sanctuary was the changing of the show-bread every sabbath day in the morning. All the service was typical, representing the continual application of the benefits of Christ's sacrifice unto his church to the end of the world. The tabernacle itself, and the inhabitation of God in it, was a type of the incarnation of the Son of God; all the utensils in it were representations of his grace. He is the light and life of the church, the lamp and the bread thereof. The incense of his intercession renders all our obedience acceptable unto God, and accordingly there was continual application unto these things without intermission every day; signifying unto us, that a continual application unto God by Christ, and a continual application of the mediation of Christ by faith, are the springs of the light, life, and comfort, of the church.—Having thus described the priest's service in the first part of the temple, ver. 6, he comes now to declare the service and administration of the high-priest in the second part of the temple, or holy of holies, verse 7.

7 But into the second *went* the high-priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

Observe here, 1. The person administering described, *The high-priest alone*; none of the priests were permitted to be so near him as the sanctuary when he administered in the most holy place. Thus sacredly was the presence of God, in the holy of holies, made inaccessible, not only to the people, but even to all the priests themselves. The great truth which was represented and shadowed forth was, that there is no entrance into the gracious presence of God, but by our great high-priest, the holy Jesus. *The high-priest alone*, and no other person, entered into the holy of holies. Observe, 2. The high-priest engaging in his service, *He entered through the veil into the holy place*. This was a type both of the entrance of Christ into heaven, and of our entrance by him unto the throne of grace. We read, *Matt. xxvii. 1*, of the rending of this veil at the death of our Saviour from top to bottom: signifying thereby, that the way was laid open into the holy place, and the gracious presence of God discovered, and made accessible to all that come unto him by Jesus Christ. Observe, 3. The time of this service expressed, it was *once only every year*; and the day, the precise day of the year, determined, *Lev. xvi. 29*, to wit, the tenth day of the month Tisri, answering our September, called the great day of atonement; on which day such a complete atonement was made for sin, that the Jews had a saying, "That on the day of expiation all Israel was made as innocent as in the day of creation." Observe, 4. The nature of this service; the apostle tells us, it was not without blood, that is, he did it by blood, sprinkling it seven times with his finger towards the mercy-seat, *Lev. xvi. 11, 12*. There is an emphasis in the expression, *not without blood*, to manifest the necessity of the death and blood-shedding of Jesus Christ our great High-priest, and the impossibility of our entering into the gracious presence of God without the blood of the reconciling sacrifice, Christ Jesus. Observe, 5. For whom this blood was offered; first, for himself, then, for the people; that is, for his own sins, and the sins of the people; this argued the great imperfection of that state; whereas Christ, our great High-priest, was not to offer up the blood of bulls, but his own blood; not for himself at all, but for others only; not once a year, but once for all: *By one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified*.

8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.

The apostle in this verse declares the spiritual use and signification of the Levitical service, and what the Holy Ghost did intend thereby, namely, that the true and proper means to enter into heaven, the holy of holies, was not so fully and clearly manifested; and that heaven, represented by the holy of holies, was as yet inaccessible; for Christ first entered into heaven as our forerunner, with his blood to appear before God, and thereby to prepare the way for our entrance after him. Hence learn, 1. That the Holy Ghost's design in all the Levitical service, was to direct the faith of believers to Christ the promised Messiah, who was signified thereby: *The Holy Ghost this signifying*. Learn, 2. That although typical institutions, attended diligently unto, were sufficient to direct the faith of the Jews unto the expectation of a real expiation of sin, and a gracious acceptance with God thereupon; yet the clear manifestation of the way of expiation of sin by the blood of Christ, is the great privilege and discovery of the gospel. Learn, 3. Although the standing of the first tabernacle was a great mercy and privilege, yet the removal of it was a greater, because it made way for the bringing in of that which was much better, the gospel state.

9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience: 10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

As if the apostle had said, "The first tabernacle was but a figure, or typical representation of good things to come, serving only for the present nonage of the church; for the gifts and sacrifices then offered could not of themselves perfectly justify, sanctify, or save any man, nor could they pacify the conscience of the sinner." Where note, That conscience cannot be satisfied until God's wrath be pacified. Now the ceremonial rites could not pacify God's wrath, because they could not satisfy God's justice; nothing but the blood of Christ could do that, which those sacrifices were only typical representations and prefigurations of. Observe, farther, The apostle's reasons why those legal rites could not make them perfect; namely, because the nature of them was such, that they reached only to the outward man, consisting only, for the most part, in *meats, drinks, and divers washings*, that con-

cerned the flesh and body of man, which did not of themselves commend any man to God, and were imposed upon them as a yoke until the time of reformation, that is, the time of the Messiah, the time of the New-Testament dispensation. Note here, The great imperfection of the Jewish dispensation; it was weak and imperfect, and consequently not to be continued. Note farther, That nothing can give peace to conscience, but what gives satisfaction to God's justice. Whoever seeks it in any other way, than by virtue of Christ's atonement, will never attain it in this world, or in that which is to come: *No offerings could make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.*

11 But Christ being come an high-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; 12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Our apostle having showed in the preceding verses how, and after what manner, the Levitical priests executed their office, he comes now to declare how, and after what manner, Christ, our great High-priest, did also execute his. And, 1. As the Levitical priests had a tabernacle, an earthly sanctuary, to officiate in; so Christ had a greater and more perfect tabernacle to execute his office in, namely, that of his own body, not like their's, made with hands, but miraculously formed in the virgin's womb, by the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost, in which tabernacle the fulness of the godhead dwelt substantially. The human nature of Christ was that tabernacle in which the Son of God administered his sacerdotal office in this world, and wherein he continueth yet so to do in heaven by his intercession. And well may this tabernacle be called *greater*, being so not in quantity and measure, but in dignity and worth; and *more perfect*, that is, more perfectly fitted and suited to the end of a tabernacle, both for the inhabitation of the divine nature, and the means of exercising the sacerdotal office, in the making atonement for sin, than the other was. Learn hence, That the human nature of Christ, in which he exercised and discharged the duties of his sacerdotal office, in making atonement for sin, is the greatest, most perfect, and excellent ordinance of God, far excelling

those that were most excellent under the Old Testament. The glory of this tabernacle of our Saviour's body in heaven, will be the object of holy admiration unto all eternity, as it was admirably fitted and perfected for service and usefulness here on earth. Observe, 2. The apostle declares, That as Christ had a more excellent tabernacle, so he was incomparably a more excellent high-priest, than ever the legal dispensation had; *they entered the holy of holies, He entered heaven; they entered often, He but once; they entered with the blood of goats and calves, He in his own blood.* And the effect, fruit, and benefit of it was unspeakable; thereby he obtained *eternal redemption for us.* Note here, That whereas it is said that Christ entered into heaven with his own blood, it is not so to be understood, as if he carried the material blood which he shed with him into heaven, in a vessel, or otherwise, as the high-priest carried the blood of the sacrifice in his hand into the most holy place; but that Christ presented his body in heaven, out of which the blood was shed, and by the merit of his death made expiation for sin, and purchased eternal redemption for sinners. Learn hence, That the entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ as our great High-priest into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us, and to save us thereby to the uttermost, was a matter so great and glorious, that it could not be accomplished but by his own blood. No other sacrifice was sufficient to this end: *Not by the blood of bulls and goats.*

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; 14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?

The apostle had asserted in the former verses, That eternal redemption was the fruit of God's sacrifice; he proves it in these, and that by an argument drawn from the less to the greater; thus, "If, says he, the blood of bulls and goats, and the water that was mixed with the ashes of the burnt heifer, (or red cow, mentioned *Num. xix.*) purified from ceremonial uncleanness, and procured the eternal sanctification of the flesh, or outward man; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, by the eternal Spirit, (that is, his godhead, his divine nature,) offered up himself, his whole man

soul and body, a sacrifice, without spot, to God the Father, be able to purge our consciences from all spiritual impurity and uncleanness of sin, that dead, because deadly, work, and render us fit to serve the living God in an holy course of christian obedience! Note here, 1. That Christ's offering himself to God, was a special act, as high-priest of the church, wherein he gave up himself in a way of most profound obedience, to do and suffer whatever the justice of God required unto the expiation of sin, even to the shedding of his blood. Note, 2. That Christ's godhead it was which rendered the suffering of his manhood infinitely meritorious; or that Christ's blood was effectual, not simply as it was material blood, but as offered by the eternal Spirit; his blood, though not the blood of God, yet was the blood of him that was God. Note, 3. That the purging of our consciences from dead works is an immediate effect of the death of Christ, and a benefit which upon our faith and obedience we are made partakers of. Note, 4. That the best works of men, antecedently unto the purging of their consciences by the blood of Christ, are but dead works, unsuitable to the nature of the living God. Lord, help us to remember, that when we come to hear, to pray, or perform any act of worship, that we are doing it to the living God. O how improper for, and unsuitable to, a living God, are dead services, without life, without heart, without spirit!

15 And for this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. 16 For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17 For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

These words represent unto us one special benefit accruing by the death of Christ, namely, the ratification of the gospel covenant: for by this mean he took upon him the glorious office to be the mediator of the new covenant, that by the intervention of his death he might make satisfaction for the sins of believers under the old testament, as well as for those that live under the new: and that as well those that lived before Christ's coming in the flesh, as since, might, by virtue of his death, obtain the promised eternal inheritance. Note

here, That God designed an eternal inheritance unto some persons; that the persons designed are them that are called; that the way and manner of conveying a right and title to his inheritance was a promise; that there was an obstacle to the enjoyment of this inheritance, which was transgression against the first covenant; that this obstacle might be removed, and the inheritance enjoyed, God made a new covenant, which had a mediator, who expiated sin by the sacrifice of his death. Note farther, that the efficacy and merit of Christ's death and mediation, extends itself to all that are effectually called, as well those that lived before his coming in the flesh, as to those that lived since. Note lastly, How the covenant of grace is here called a testament, because it received its ratification and confirmation by the blood of Christ. All things required in a testament are here found, namely, a testator deceased, Christ Jesus; legacies bequeathed, temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings; legatees named, the heirs of promise; conditions required, upon which only the legacies may be obtained, faith, repentance, and sincere obedience; seals annexed, baptism, and the Lord's supper: witnesses subscribing, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. The sum is this, That the death of Christ is the foundation, life, and soul, of the new covenant, and that the new covenant is of the nature of a testament, and the benefits promised therein, to wit, remission of sin, reconciliation with God, sanctification on earth, and glorification in heaven, are legacies freely left us by our deceased testator, who *was dead, but is alive again, and lives for evermore* to execute his own will and testament, of which the scripture is the instrument, and the sacraments the seals. Learn from the whole, 1. That there is an irrevocable grant of the whole inheritance of grace and glory made unto believers in the new covenant. 2. That as the grant of these things is free and gracious, so the enjoyment of them is secured against contingencies, by the death of Jesus Christ the great Testator. *A testament is of force after men are dead; but of no strength at all whilst the testator liveth.*

18 Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. 19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the blood of calves, and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, 20 Saying, This is the blood of the testament

which God hath enjoined unto you. 21 Moreover, he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. 22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Our apostle having entered upon a comparison between the first and second covenant in the former verses, he goes on to prosecute it in these, showing that both of them were *dedicated*, that is, confirmed by blood. The first covenant which God made with Israel in Horeb, had not its sanction without typical blood. The using of the blood for the sanction of leagues and covenants was a very ancient rite, and probably signified that the parties confederating did thereby engage blood and life for the observation of them. Now that the covenant between God and Israel was thus solemnized, and received its confirmation by blood, the apostle makes appear from the history of Moses, *Exod. xxiv.* unto which he appeals; where we find the *sprinkler* to be Moses, the *sprinkling* to be blood, the *things sprinkled* were the *book* wherein the covenant was written, and the *people* who engaged themselves in the covenant. Now the use and end of this sprinkling upon the people, was the confirmation of the covenant on their part, as the sprinkling of it upon the altar was the confirmation on God's part. And the words added to the action were, *This is the blood of the covenant*: that is, this is the blood by which the covenant is confirmed, and made inviolable betwixt God and you: he calls it the *blood of the covenant*, because it was a sign of it, and a seal confirming it. In like manner the new covenant was confirmed by blood, even by the blood of Christ, as is evident from his own words, *Luke xxii. 20.* *This cup is the new testament in my blood for remission of sins.* Remission of sin is one principal blessing promised in the new covenant; but 'tis promise had been in vain, if Christ's blood had not been shed to satisfy divine justice, and thereby make sin remissible. For though man had repented, and could have made even hell itself to swim with his tears, yet his sins could not have been remitted, had not the blood made it remissible; so that the blood of Christ is the firm and immoveable basis and foundation upon which the new covenant was fixed. This is the first part of the apostle's design. In these words, namely, to prove the necessity of Christ's blood for confirmation of the new covenant. Next, he proves the efficacy of that blood for

taking away of sin; telling us, that the tabernacle, the vessels, and all the utensils thereunto belonging, yea, all things which were purified, were ceremonially purified by blood; and that, as without shedding of blood *then* there could be no remission, so no acceptance with God *now* without the shedding of the blood of Christ. Learn hence, That in all things wherein we have to do with God, and whereby we approach unto him, it is the blood of Christ, and the application of it to our consciences, that gives a gracious acceptance with God; without this all is unclean and defiled *now*, as without shedding of blood there was no purification then.

23 *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these: but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

As if the apostle had said, "If the tabernacle and utensils thereto belonging, which were patterns and types of heavenly things, must be consecrated by the blood of bulls and goats, much more must the heavenly things themselves, which were shadowed by them, be purified and consecrated by better blood than the blood of beasts, even with the precious blood of Jesus Christ." Learn hence, 1. That there is such uncleanness in our natures, in our persons, in our duties, in all our services, that unless they and we are purified by the blood of Christ, neither we nor they can have any acceptance with God. Learn, 2. That the sacrifice of Christ is the one only everlasting fountain and spring of all sanctification and sacred dedication, whereby the whole new creation is purified and dedicated unto God. Learn, 3. That neither heaven itself, nor heavenly things, could have been made meet for us, or we for them, had not they been dedicated, and we purged by the sacrifice of Christ. By *heavenly things* here we may understand heaven itself, of which the tabernacle was a type. Now as the purification of the tabernacle was only to prepare it to be a place in which their persons might be presented before God; in like manner was heaven itself prepared and purified for us by our Lord's entrance into it, with his own atonement, or propitiatory sacrifice: Christ's entering into heaven, and his appearing with his blood of sprinkling in the presence of God for us, procures the acceptance of our prayers and praises whilst we live, and our admission into those heavenly mansions of bliss and glory prepared for us when we die.

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are the figures of the true*: but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

Observe here, 1. The person spoken of, and that is Christ, our great high-priest, the mediator of the new covenant. Observe, 2. What is spoken of him, 1. Negatively, That he is not entered into the holy place of the sanctuary, or tabernacle made with hands, that is built by the hands of men, which was a figure of the true holy of holies, to wit, heaven. All God's appointments in his service have their proper season, their proper glory, beauty, and use; even the tabernacle, and the external utensils thereof, made with men's hands, had so, while they had the force of a divine institution. 2. Positively, he is entered into heaven itself, the place of the peculiar residence of the presence, majesty, and glory of God; where all his blessed saints enjoy him, and his holy angels minister unto him. Observe, 3. The end of our great High-priest's entrance into heaven declared, *Now to appear in the presence of God for us*. The priests of old, when they entered the holy place, were forced soon to go out again, to prepare for a new sacrifice: but this word *now* is expressive of the whole season and duration of time, from the entrance of Christ into heaven, unto the consummation of all things: there is no moment of time in which it may not be said, he now appeareth *in the presence of God for us*. Learn hence, That the continual appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ for us in heaven, as our great High-priest, in the presence of his Father, is the foundation of both our safety and our comfort, from whence relief may be derived upon all occasions, whatever difficulties, temptations, and trials, may be before us.

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high-priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Our apostle in these words sets forth the excellency of Christ's sacrifice from its singularity; it needeth no repetition, as their sacrifices of old did: their sacrifices were repeated often, and their repetition was an evidence of their imperfection;

but Christ's once offering himself a sacrifice was sufficient, in regard of the infinite worth and dignity of his person: *Once in the end of the world*, the gospel age, the last age of the world, *hath he appeared, to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. Here note, That the virtue of Christ's sacrifice, once offered, did extend itself to all times, and purchase pardon for sins committed in all ages, even long before it was offered: for the death of Christ must be considered not as a natural, but as a moral cause: not as a medicine that heals, but as a ransom that frees a captive. A captive may be released upon assurance given that a ransom shall be paid, though it be not actually paid. Thus the death of Christ was available to purchase pardon for believers before his coming, because he interposed as their surety; and therefore called the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, not only in respect of God's decree, but Christ's efficacy: the salvation we derive from him, was ever in him; Christ's once offering was sufficient; his sacrifice may be often commemorated, but only once offered. Such indeed is the absolute perfection of the once offering of Christ, that it stands in need of, and will admit of, no repetition in any kind. Note farther, That this once offering of Christ, is always effectual unto all the ends of it, now and hereafter, even no less than it was in the day and hour when it was actually offered. This sacrifice needs no repetition like those of old, but is always fresh in the virtue of it, and needs nothing but renewed application by faith for the communication of its effects and fruits unto us: *For by one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified*. Though the sufferings of Christ were necessary to the expiation of sin, yet he suffered neither more nor oftener than was necessary; to have suffered often was altogether needless, and would have been useless. Note, lastly, The great end for which Christ once became a sacrifice, namely, *to put away sin*; plainly implying, that sin had erected a dominion, a tyranny, over all men, as by a law; that no power of any mere creature was able to disannul or abolish this law of sin; that the destruction and dissolution of this law of sin, was the great end of Christ's coming, to discharge his priestly office in the sacrifice of himself: *Now in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away, to abolish and destroy, sin by the sacrifice of himself*.

27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offer-

ed to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.

These words may be considered relatively and absolutely. Relatively thus: "As God has appointed that all men should once die penally for sin, and then be judged, so did he determine that Christ should once suffer penally, to expiate sin, and take away the guilt of it fully. And as after death men must appear the second time to judgment, so after his once offering to take away sin and death, Christ shall appear the second time to bestow upon us eternal salvation." Note here, That Christ's being offered to take away the sins of many, cannot be meant of his taking them away in the socinian sense, to wit, by his holy doctrine, which was confirmed by his death, but of his bearing our sins by way of imputation; for this is evident from the opposition here between his first appearance and his second: *Christ was once offered to bear our sins, but he shall appear a second time without sin.* Why! did he not appear the first time without sin? Yes, certainly he did, as to any inherent guilt; for the scripture assures us, *he had no sin.* What then is the meaning of the opposition, at his first coming he bore our sins; at his second coming he shall appear without sin? The words can have no other imaginable sense but this: that at his first coming he sustained the person of a sinner, and died as a sacrifice; but at his second coming he shall appear as a judge, to confer eternal life on those who are made partakers of the sacrifice of his death: Thus the words are to be considered relatively. Absolutely thus, "*It is appointed for all men once to die.*" Here is the first word of certainty, *all men must die*; then the word of singularity, *they must once die*, not often: once, and but once; they die by statute and appointment. The supreme Lord of life and death appoints man his time, both for coming into the world, and going out of it: we come in at his command, and leave at his disposal. *And after death the judgment*; the word *after* signifies the order of time; for death goes before, and judgment follows it." The judgment is both particular and of every individual person, and general and universal of all; after which follows the final, eternal and unalterable condition of man, either in a state of misery or felicity. The parties judged will be angels and men; the person judging Jesus Christ: he, by redeeming mankind, obtaining right and power to judge mankind: such a judge as the

power of the mightiest cannot daunt; such a judge as the subtlety of the wisest cannot delude; such a judge as the richest of the wealthiest cannot bribe; in a word, such a judge as there is no appealing from, or repealing of, his sentence, O great day! when the stiffest knee shall bow at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, and the strongest back shall break under the insupportable burden of a Redeemer's wrath! when the Alexanders and Cesars, which once shook the earth, and made the world to tremble, shall revere and lie prostrate at the foot of Christ! and, Lord, seeing that judgment is before us, let us seriously believe it, daily expect, duly prepare for it; let no profit tempt us, no pleasure entice us, no power embolden us, no privacy encourage us, to do that thing which we cannot account for at thy tribunal. Amen.

CHAP. X.

The design of our apostle in the chapter before us, is twofold: first, to show the weakness and imperfection of the Levitical sacrifices considered in themselves, and the necessity and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. Secondly, To improve this doctrine unto faith, obedience, and perseverance in our Christian profession unto death, by several weighty arguments; showing particularly the fatal danger of apostasy from Christ and his holy religion.

FOR the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comer thereunto perfect.

In the former part of this chapter, the apostle proves the impotency and imperfection of the Levitical sacrifices by sundry arguments; namely, first, from the nature of them, they were but shadows; from the plurality of them, they were many; from the repetition of them, they were often; and from the inefficaciousness of them, they could not take away sin.

The former of these is taken notice of, in this first verse, *The law having a shadow of good things to come.* An allusion probably to the art of painting, wherein a shadow is first drawn, and afterwards the very image itself; or a metaphor taken from the shadow of a body in the light of the sun. As a shadow is the representation of a body, a just and true representation of it, and of nothing else, yet but an obscure representation of a body; the life, vigour, and spirit of a body cannot be represented by it: thus was it between the sacrifices of the law, and the sacrifices of Christ; the blood of those sacrifices were representations of Christ; they were a just repre-

sensation of Christ: He was the idea in the mind of God, when Moses was charged to make all things according to the pattern showed him in the mount: and they were but an obscure and dark representation of him; the glory and efficacy of these good things appeared not visible in them. Learn hence, That whatever there may be in religious institutions, and the diligent observation of them, if they only shadow forth Jesus Christ, and do not actually exhibit him to the faith of believers with the benefits of his mediation, they cannot make us perfect, nor give us acceptance with God.

—Those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins, 3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

Here we have a second argument to prove the impotency and weakness of the legal sacrifices; and it is drawn from the repetition of non cessation of them. Thus, "Those sacrifices which were often repeated year by year, could not of themselves make satisfaction for sin, or purge the conscience of the sinner from guilt. Had justice been satisfied, and conscience quieted, there had been no reason why those sacrifices should have been so often repeated. But the case was otherwise, for in their most solemn sacrifices there was a commemoration and confession made of their former sins by the high-priest every year; which was an intimation to them that they needed a new and better sacrifice for the expiation of sin, namely, that of the Messiah, in and by which alone remission of sin was to be expected and obtained." Learn hence, 1. that the repetition and reiteration of the same sacrifices, is an evident demonstration of their weakness and insufficiency. Accordingly, the church of Rome, by affirming the sacrifice in the mass to be the very same with that which Christ offered on the cross, do prove an insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ for the expiation of sin, if the apostle's argument here be good: for he affirms, that all sacrifices that must be repeated are weak and insufficient. Learn, 2. That although repeated sins have need of repeated confession, and renewed pardon, yet they have no need of sac-

rifice: For he who is once purged has no more conscience of sin, that is, though he knows he has many sins, yet he has not a trembling, tormenting, accusing conscience, because he is purged, and his sins pardoned, through that one sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Learn, 3. That the discharge of conscience from the guilt of sin by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, is a full demonstration of the sufficiency of the virtue of that sacrifice: and that there needs no reiteration of it, but only fresh applications made unto it by repeated acts and exercises of faith.

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

The intendment of our apostle in these words is to prove, that the sacrifices of the law could not expiate sin, nor make reconciliation with God, which the sacrifice of Christ alone was ordained and appointed to. Here observe, 1. The subject matter spoken of, the blood of bulls and goats: they were accompanied with great solemnity and pomp of ceremony in their celebration; and the people had a great esteem and veneration of them in their minds; but when all was done, that which was offered was no more than the blood of bulls and goats. Observe, 2. That which is denied of these sacrifices, namely, the *taking away of sins*; to take away sin, is to make atonement for sin, to expiate the guilt of it before God by a satisfaction given, or price paid, that it shall never bind over the penitent sinner unto punishment. Observe, 3. The manner of the negation: it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Impossible from divine institution: they were never designed for that end, therefore could never effect it; for the virtue of every institution depends upon its designation to its end. Now the blood of bulls was only designed to represent the taking away of sin, but never by itself to effect it. And it was also impossible from the nature of the thing; for how could the blood of a beast expiate the sin of a man? satisfaction must be made for sin in and by the same nature that had sinned. Learn hence, That it was utterly impossible that sin should be taken away before God, and from the conscience of a sinner, by any other blood than the blood of Christ: it is this alone that cleanseth us from all sin, for he alone was the propitiation for them.

5 Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body

hast thou prepared me; 6 In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure. 7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. 8 Above, when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; (which are offered by the law:) 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. 10 By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

Our apostle having showed the weakness and insufficiency of the Levitical sacrifices in the former verses, he comes now to declare the efficacy and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, and his blessed undertaking, to do, fulfil, perform, and suffer all things required by the will and wisdom, by the holiness and righteousness of God, unto the complete salvation of the church. And this he doth by a quotation out of the Old Testament, *Psalm* lx. 6, 7, 8. Where Christ is brought in as newly made man, speaking to his Father, in and after this manner: "Forasmuch as thy wisdom did institute, and formerly appoint, sacrifices, as types to prefigure the sacrifice of thy Son, but thou didst not intend their longer continuance, when he should once be offered up; pursuant to this holy will and pleasure of thine, I am now come into the world: thou hast prepared me a body, an holy and innocent human nature, fit to be united to my glorious godhead; in which nature I will suffer, and by my sufferings satisfy thy justice for sin; and by the sufficiency of my sacrifice put a period to all the Levitical sacrifices that did precede me, and prefigure me." Learn hence, 1. That in the fulness of God's appointed time, Christ came into the world to accomplish that which the Levitical sacrifices did only prefigure, but could not effectuate. 2. That in order thereunto, Christ did assume the human nature, and offered in himself that nature willingly to his Father, as a sacrifice to atone divine displeasure. 3. That by this one sacrifice and oblation of Christ, which he performed in obedience to the will of God, all that believe in him are justified and saved, do obtain remission of sin, grace here, and glory hereafter: *By which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*.

11 And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God: 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool: 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Our apostle still proceeds upon his former argument, namely, to assign a farther difference between Christ and the Levitical priests. 1. The Levitical priesthood consisted of a plurality of persons; the priests were many: by reason of death they had many successors: but the evangelical priesthood consisted but of one single person, the Lord Jesus, called here, *this Man*. 2. The Levitical priesthood consisted of a plurality of sacrifices; there were also many, many in number, and many in kind, bulls, lambs, goats, &c. but the sacrifice which Christ offered was but one, as to the kind, namely, *that body which was prepared*, ver. 5. 3. The Levitical sacrifices were oft-times offered, ver. 11. but the sacrifice of Christ was but once offered. 4. The Levitical sacrifices could never take away sin; but Christ by the sacrifice of his death took away sin for ever, fully and everlastingly. 5. The Levitical priests stood and ministered, ver. 11. *Every priest standeth daily*. This is the posture of servants; but Christ sits, which is the posture of a Lord; *This man, after he had offered*, sat down. 6. They stood daily ministering and offering, because their sacrifices could not take away sin; but Christ did his work fully by one offering, and after that sits or rests for ever in heaven. Learn hence, 1. That Christ crucified is the only divine and proper sacrifice under the gospel. *Divine*, because its institution and appointment was of God: *proper*, because all the essential properties of an expiatory sacrifice were found in this. It was a living creature offered by a priest; it was offered to God, and it was a sweet savour unto him; and it is the only proper sacrifice of the gospel. Doing good is called a sacrifice, *Heb. xiii. 16*. Righteousness is called a sacrifice, *Psalm* iv. 6. but not properly, but allusively and metaphorically only. Learn, 2. That the sacrifice of Christ is but of one kind, and was but once offered; yet is of such unspeakable value, and everlasting efficacy, as to take away sin fully and finally, and to perfect all them that are or shall be sanctified to

the end of the world. The virtue of this sacrifice reacheth backward as far as Adam, and reacheth forward to the last believer springing from Adam: and as it reacheth backward and forward to all believers, in former, present, and future ages, so to all the sins of all believers, which are fully purged and expiated by it; the design and end of this oblation being to atone, pacify, and reconcile God, by giving a full and adequate compensation and satisfaction to the justice of God, for the wrong done to the holiness of his law. Thus our Jesus by one offering has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

15 *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 16 *This is the covenant that I will make with them, After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; 17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.*

Our apostle had asserted the perfection of Christ's sacrifice in the former verses, he proves it in these by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, recorded *Jer. xxxi. 31.* where, after he had promised a new covenant instead of the old, and had said, *This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, namely, when the days of the Old Testament are expired, then he says, I will put my law into their hearts, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.* Now seeing God promiseth under the new covenant sanctification and remission of sin, to all believers, of which covenant Christ is mediator, and by whose death the covenant is ratified and confirmed, therefore this one sacrifice once offered up is abundantly sufficient. And if remission of sins be obtained by Christ's one sacrifice, there needs no repetition of it, nor any other offering for sin. Learn hence, That the sacrifice of Christ was of that excellent virtue and transcendent merit, that by once offering it took away sin, all sin, and made it eternally remissible; and upon faith actually and eternally remitted: to what purpose then should there be any more offerings for sin? Yea, they who look for and trust to any other, fall into that sin for which there is no remission provided in the covenant, nor shall any other offering be accepted for them for ever; for they despise both the wisdom and grace of God, the blood of Christ, and the testimony of

the Holy Ghost; wherefore there is no remission.

Here now we are come to a full end of the doctrinal part of this epistle concerning the nature of Christ's priesthood, the necessity and efficacy of his sacrifice, the power and prevalency of his intercession. O glorious mysteries; the light of the church of the Gentiles, the glory of the people of Israel, the foundation and bulwark of evangelical faith!

19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh: 21 And *having* an high-priest over the house of God: 22 Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

The apostle having thus finished the doctrinal part of his discourse, and informed their judgment of the excellency of the evangelical service above the Levitical sacrifices, he comes now in the applicatory part of his discourse to direct their practice in several weighty and important duties, which appeared to be incumbent upon them, as, namely, to draw near to God, verse 22. to persevere in the Christian profession, verse 23. to stir up one another to love and good works, verse 24. to continue in Christian communion, verse 25. The first duty exhorted to, is to draw near to God, seeing we have boldness, &c. Let us draw near with a true heart. Note here, 1. The duty exhorted to, and that is, to draw near to God; in general, to worship him; in particular, to pray unto him, and seek remission of sin and eternal life from him; to come unto God as clothed with glorious majesty, sitting upon a throne of grace and propitiated by the blood of Christ. Note, 2. The manner of performing this duty, *With a pure heart, in full assurance of faith;* with the heart, or we give him a skin instead of a sacrifice: with sincerity of heart, which is the life and soul of all acceptable worship; and with a full assurance of faith, grounded upon the fidelity of God, and the immutability of the promise. Note, 3. The qualifications of the person: he that draws near to God must, 1. Have his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, that is, his soul cleansed by the blood of Christ, and freed from the accusations of an evil condemning conscience.

2. His body washed with pure water, to wit, the laver of regeneration, which was signified by the legal washings. Note, 4. The encouragement we have thus to draw near to God: and that is threefold. We have a *new and living way* unto the holiest by the blood of Jesus: an allusion to the legal dispensation, wherein the high-priest had a way to pass through the vail with blood into the holiest, to expiate the people's sins, and obtain mercy for them. Ours is called a *new way*, because newly made manifest; and a *living way*, because it leads to, and ends in life eternal; or a living way, in opposition to the typical way of going into the holiest, which was a *dead way* to all but the high-priest, and to him too if he entered above once a year, and then also if he entered without blood. Farther, This new and living way is here said to be consecrated through the veil of Christ's flesh, that is, made passable for penitent sinners, the throne of grace made accessible through the blood of a mediator. When Christ died, the veil of the temple was rent, to signify that our great High-priest was ready to enter the holy place of heaven, to procure eternal redemption for us. 2. Encouragement is *boldness*, or freedom and liberty to enter into the holiest; a freedom for our prayers to enter heaven whilst we live, and a right and liberty for our persons to enter when we die. 3. The mean whereby we obtain this liberty, *By the blood of Jesus*. We that before could not come near him for our sins, may now come near him by faith in the blood of his Son; for that blood satisfied justice, merited divine favour, and made God accessible. Learn hence, 1. That as sin had made God inaccessible to sinners, as sinners; so the blood of Christ, that new and living way, has made him accessible to believers. 2. That although from the first promise of Christ there was always a way for believers to come to God, yet it was not so manifest as it was after Christ's death and ascension, and the gospel's revelation.

23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

The second duty which the apostle exhorts the Hebrews here unto, is, perseverance in the Christian faith and hope, in order to the actual enjoyment of the great reward. Where observe, 1. The duty itself, *to hold fast the profession of our faith*; not blindly, without due examination, but having examined the grounds and foundations of our faith, to maintain the profession of it against all temptations and terrors of this world, occasioned by sufferings and

persecutions, and against all the cunning arts and insinuations of busy and disputing men, whose design is to unhinge us from our religion, and make us proselytes to their party and faction. Then let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. Observe, 2. The reason enforcing this duty, *Because he is faithful that has promised*. Mark the gradation: We have a promise, even a promise of eternal glory, as the reward of our perseverance. This promise is God's promise, not man's, and the promise of a faithful God, who neither can nor will change his mind; he can as soon change his being, as change his word and promise: *He is faithful, &c.*

24 And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works:

Observe here, The duty exhorted to; to consider one another, that is, to watch over one another. This consideration respects the gifts, the graces, the temptations, the dangers of one another, and is the foundation of all those mutual duties of warning, exhorting, and admonishing one another: duties, God knows, generally lost among us, and with them is the glory of the Christian religion departed from us. Learn hence, That the mutual watch of Christians over each other, and their mutual exhortations of each other unto gospel duties, is necessarily required as a special mean for their preservation in their Christian profession. Observe, 2. The duty we are to provoke, and be provoked unto, and that is, *to love and good works*; that is no true faith which can be separated from love; and that is no true love that is separated from good works. The great end of Christian communion amongst believers, should be to excite one another to love, which is the spring and fountain of all good works; and to provoke one another to good works, as the genuine effect and fruit of a sincere love to God and our neighbour.

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.

Observe here, 1. That in the apostle's times there were Christian assemblies, in which Christians did meet together to worship and serve God, and edify and comfort one another; and in times of peace and liberty they had convenient places erected and separated for that end and use. The light of nature as well as of scripture, dictates that God is to be worshipped solemnly

and publicly; that public worship pleases him most, and that he accepts it best. Observe, 2. It was the manner or custom of some then to forsake the public assemblies; some out of sloth and negligence, others out of fear of persecution. This was a dangerous sin, and so continues. God and Christ esteem themselves forsaken when their worship and worshippers are causelessly forsaken. Observe, 3. The duty intimated and directed to, *Not to forsake the assembling together, as some do*; for Christian assemblies are the life, the food, and nourishment of our souls; consequently, forsaking of church assemblies is usually the forerunner of apostasy. Observe, 4. The great inducement and encouragement to this duty, *Because the day approacheth*. What day? *Ans.* The day of Jerusalem's approaching destruction to them; the day of death and judgment coming upon and hastening towards us. Learn hence, That the intimations given of approaching judgments, ought to influence unto special diligence in all evangelical duties. 2. That to see evidently the approaches of death and judgment, and yet not to be sedulous and diligent in the duties of divine worship, is a sign and token of a backsliding frame, tending unto final apostasy from Christ and his holy religion.

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.

In these verses the apostle gives a vehement enforcement of his preceding exhortation to an unfainting perseverance in the profession of Christianity; and this is drawn from the dreadful consequences of apostasy. We have here the nature of the sin expressed, the impossibility of deliverance from the guilt of it declared, and the punishment that will unavoidably follow upon it asserted. Observe, 1. Wherein the nature of this sin consists, *If we sin wilfully*, that is, by renouncing Christianity. Where note, How our apostle puts himself in among the number; to show that there is no respect of persons in this matter, but those who have equally sinned, shall be equally punished. Note farther, That the apostle, by sinning wilfully, does not mean every wilful sin, and that there is no recovery after any voluntary sin committed; but by wilfully, he means obstinately, maliciously, and with despite. Observe, 2.

The season and circumstance of this sin, *After we have received the knowledge of the truth*; that is, after the gospel had been preached unto us, and we, upon conviction of its truths, and sense of its power, have taken upon us the public profession of Christianity; after we have dedicated ourselves to Christ in baptism, and joined ourselves unto the body of his church; after all this, to relinquish and renounce the Christian profession, either for fear of suffering, or love of this present world, exposes us to unutterable and inevitable condemnation. Observe, 3. What the apostle charges as an aggravation of this sin, namely, that it cannot be expiated, *There remains no more sacrifice for sin*: for God has no other Son to offer as a sacrifice for sin, if this be rejected; and no other Spirit to make that sacrifice effectual, if the Holy Spirit be despised and finally resisted: and therefore no ground of hope can remain for such apostates. The punishment of sins unpardonable is unavoidable: it is an eternal decree of divine justice, that the sacrifice of Christ shall never benefit that man, who finally falls away after he has received the knowledge of the truth. Observe, 4. The dreadful and tremendous judgment here threatened to apostates, and what they must eternally expect, namely, the *fiery indignation* and fearful wrath of the just and holy God. From the whole learn, 1. That there is an inseparable connection between apostasy and eternal ruin. 2. That the minds of wretched apostates are oft-times filled with dreadful expectations of approaching wrath. 3. That the dread and terror of God's final judgment against apostates, is in itself inconceivable, and accordingly shadowed out by things of the greatest dread and terror in the world. 4. That God's fiery indignation, though it shall devour his adversaries, yet shall it never eat them up; it shall eternally prey upon them, but never consume them, or annihilate their being. O mysterious fire! whose strange property is always to torture, but never to kill; or always to kill, but never to consume. God grant that we may never experimentally know, or feelingly find, either where hell is, or what it is.

28 He that despised Moses's law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; 29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an

unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace ?

The apostle here confirms what he had before spoken of the sad and certain destruction of apostates, and compares it with the punishment inflicted on the breakers of Moses's law. If those under the testimony of two or three witnesses of that apostasy died without mercy; how much sorer punishment is due to the contemnners of Christ, who tread under foot, that is, vilify and undervalue, our Lord Jesus Christ, esteeming him as one that died a public malefactor ? *Counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing*, that is, a common thing; making nothing of the solemnest rite that ever was used in the world for the confirmation of any covenant, to wit, the shedding of the blood of the Son of God : *and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace*, as if he were guilty of lying and falsehood, in bearing witness of the divine power of Christ. Learn hence, 1. That although to transgress Moses's law was a heinous offence, yet to sin wilfully against the gospel, after we have received the knowledge of it, is far more heinous. Learn, 2. That to revolt from and rebel against God loving sinful man, against Jesus Christ ransoming and redeeming captive slaves, and against the Holy Spirit sanctifying and cleansing polluted souls, comes nearest the sin of devils : and as the sin is the more heinous, so the punishment must be far more grievous : for God has allotted different degrees of punishments unto different degrees and aggravations of sins. Learn, 3. That the punishment of final apostasy is eternal, without any hope of mercy, and without the least relaxation of punishment; for they shall have judgment without any mercy.

30 For we know him that hath said, *Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense*, saith the Lord. And again, *The Lord shall judge his people*.

The apostle had declared in the verses before, the certain judgment of apostates : here he declares the judge, the Lord, and the judgment, *vengeance* ; *Vengeance is mine*, saith the Lord. Where, by vengeance, is meant vindictive justice in punishing sinners. The apostle's argument seems to lie thus : " If God professes himself an avenger of all sin and injury done to his people, as he certainly doth, *Deut. xxxii. 36.* much more will he show himself an avenger of so horrible an indignity offered to his Son and his Holy Spirit." Learn hence, That the consideration of the right-

eous nature of God, and that inclosure he has made of vengeance to himself under an irrevocable purpose for its execution, gives indubitable assurance of the unavoidable destruction of all wilful apostates.

31 *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Our apostle, in these words, winds up his whole argument against the wilful despisers of the gospel, taken from the aggravation of that sin, with the severity of the punishment that would certainly befall them that are guilty of it. Note here, 1. The description given of God, he is the *living God* ; so called both by way of opposition unto all dead and dumb idols, and also with respect to his lively power and strength, whereby he is able to avenge the sins of men ; and likewise to signify the eternal duration of his existence. He ever liveth to execute his wrath, and inflict vengeance on the apostate sinner. Learn, That the name of the living God is full either of terror or comfort to the souls of men. O Lord ! thine attributes, which are the principal delight of all sincere Christians, and the special object of their hope and faith, are an eternal spring of dread and terror to all impenitent sinners. Note, 2. What is the effect and fruit of all sin in general, and of apostasy in particular, namely, a falling into God's hands. There is a threefold hand of God mentioned in scripture ; his protecting hand his correcting hand, and his wrathful and revenging hand. It is safe and comfortable to fall into God's protecting hand ; it is profitable and beneficial, though not pleasing and delightful, to fall into God's chastening and correcting hand ; but to fall into his angry hand, his wrathful and revengeful hand, this is sad and fearful ; either to fall under the sentence of his wrath in this life, or under the full and final execution of that wrath in the life to come. Note, 3. The tremendous dreadfulness of that wrath ; it is a fearful, dreadful thing, that which no tongue can utter, no heart can conceive. *Who knoweth the power of thy wrath ? Ps. xc.* Learn hence, That the wrath and vengeance which the ever-living God will certainly inflict upon all wicked sinners in general, and upon all wretched apostates in particular, is very dreadful and tremendous ; and so must needs be, because it is a wrath inconceivably great and unavoidably sure, and because it is the wrath of a just God, of an Almighty God, and of an ever-living God.

32 But call to remembrance the

former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.

Our apostle here proceeds to a new argument to persuade Christians to perseverance, drawn from the consideration of their former sufferings for Christianity: "Since you were illuminated, that is, baptized into the Christian faith, ye endured courageously afflictions, a fight of afflictions, yea, a great fight of afflictions." Learn hence, That the wisdom of God oft-times permits and suffers persons, at their first conversion, to fall into manifold trials and temptations. Carnal relations now first scoff, then frown, and at last cast off. The world hates them, marks them out for persecution, loads them with calumny and slander. But observe farther, The apostle directs them to call to remembrance their former sufferings: he does not mean the remembrance of what was bitter and afflictive in their sufferings, but the cause for which they suffered, and the presence of God enjoyed by them in and under their sufferings. This would encourage, embolden, and strengthen unto duty. Learn hence, That a wise management of former experience is a great direction and encouragement unto future obedience.

33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions: and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

Here our apostle particularly mentions the sufferings which the primitive saints underwent for the sake of Christianity, and reduces them to three heads, shame, pain, loss; they suffered in their names, by being disgraced; in their persons, by being scourged; in their estates, by the spoiling of their goods. Let all that make profession of the name of Christ expect and provide for such sufferings, especially for reproaches. We may put a due value upon our names and reputations, but must not be over-solicitous about the preservation of them. Let us keep in the way of our duty, and leave our good name to God's care and keeping. The world first thunders out reproaches, then falls into a storm of persecution. Learn thence, That all temporary sufferings, in all their aggravating circumstances, in all their formidable dress and appearance, may be, and oft-times are, the lot and portion of those who have undertaken the profession of Christianity. *Ye endured a great fight of afflictions, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock to the world.* The Christians here were exposed to the

world as it were upon a stage, or in a theatre, where multitudes might gaze upon them, revile and make a sport of them.

34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

The first words of this verse, *Ye had compassion on me in my bonds*, prove St. Paul to be the author of this epistle; for who else could there be, whose bonds for the gospel were so known and so famous among the believing Jews? His bonds were first at Jerusalem, afterwards at Rome, the two capital cities of the Jews and Gentiles. And St. Paul declares here what a tender sympathy and fellow-feeling with him in his sufferings they did express: *Ye had compassion of me in my bonds*, that is, ye owned me in my sufferings, ye sympathized with me under my sufferings, ye administered to my succour and relief, when burdened with my sufferings. Observe next, He reminds them of their deportment under their own sufferings: *Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods*. Probably the bread which they ate, the clothes which they wore, the beds whereon they lay, were taken from them by their persecutors! yet all this spoil was taken joyfully; not more joyfully by the spoilers than it was by the spoiled. Learn, It is the peculiar glory and excellency of the gospel, that it gives insuperable joy unto the Christian's mind, under the greatest outward sufferings: *They endured joyfully the spoiling of their goods*. Observe, lastly, The reason of this their Christian patience under sufferings: they had a substance in heaven; and they had a better substance in heaven than they lost upon earth; and they knew they had it: *Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and more enduring substance*. Learn hence, That faith, by giving an incomparable preference to the things of heaven above all perishing things on earth, affords abundant joy and full satisfaction in the loss of them all, upon an account of an assured interest in better things.

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

As if he had said, "Seeing ye have endured so much, never shrink back from a bold and courageous profession of Christ and his holy religion, which will be crowned with a great recompence of reward." Observe, 1. The exhortation, *Cast not away*

your confidence and courage in the free profession of Christianity, like cowardly soldiers, that in the heat of the battle do cast down their shields and armour, and run away. The Christian is a spiritual soldier: he must not shrink, or give back, but die a conqueror rather than be taken prisoner. Observe, 2. The reason which enforces the exhortation, *Which hath great recompence of reward*. Mark, *the reward is certain*, and that it is due to such as persevere. Perseverance and the reward are inseparably joined together, so that the one shall infallibly follow the other. Hence learn, That in times of suffering, and in the approaches of them, it is the duty of believers to look upon the glory of heaven under the notion of a refreshing and all-sufficient reward: *Cast not away your confidence which hath great recompence of reward*.

36 For ye have need of patience; that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.
37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Ye have need of patience: but had they it not already, when they endured such a great fight of afflictions? Yes, assuredly; the meaning therefore is this: "Ye have need of the continued exercise of patience;" implying, that without the constant exercise of patience, none can pass through tribulation, to the glory of God, and their own advantage. We have need of patience to perform difficult duties, to resist strong temptations, to wait for an answer of our prayers, and also to wait for the reward of our patience. After we have done the will of God, we have need of patience to enable us to wait for the receiving of the promise, that is, the good promised. Here note, That the glory of heaven, firmly believed, will powerfully sustain the Christian spirit under sufferings. 2. That patience is as necessary to enable us to expect and wait for the reward of our sufferings, as it is needful and necessary to support and uphold us under sufferings. Observe farther, The comfortable assurance which the apostle gives both of the certain coming and speedy coming of Christ to reward their faith and patience: *He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry*. Note here, The Christian's suffering season will be short, Christ will come to call him off. *He will come, and will not tarry*; and when he comes, no difficulties shall be able to stand before him, but such as have suffered patiently, shall be rewarded gloriously.

38 Now the just shall live by

faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

These words, *The just shall live by faith*, are taken out of the prophet Habakkuk, and are three times made use of by St. Paul, in his epistles, *Rom. i. 17, Gal. iii. 11*, and in this place. By the just man, understand a justified man; by the life which he lives, understand a life of sanctification, and of glorification, a life of grace and holiness, and a life of glory and happiness. Learn, That whatever life the believer lives, after a more excellent manner, and for more excellent purposes and ends than other men, he lives that life by the help and assistance of his faith.—In the following words, *But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him*; Observe,

1. The crime supposed, if any man that has embraced Christianity, shall, either for sufferings feared or felt, draw back from his holy profession. The word signifies to sneak and slink away out of fear; and the apostle means by it a quitting our profession of Christianity for fear of suffering. Learn hence, That in and under great, sharp, and long trials, persons are in danger of drawing back from that profession of the gospel wherein they are engaged. Observe, 2. The sentence pronounced upon this crime, *My soul shall have no pleasure in him*; that is, God will be exceedingly displeased with him, and punish him very severely; intimating that apostasy from the profession of God's true religion, is a sin highly provoking to him, and will be most severely punished by him. Here note, That these threatenings imply, that there is a possibility of the saints falling away, considered in themselves; but not that they are totally deserted by the Holy Spirit, and left under the reigning power of sin. These threatenings are intended to awaken their care, and have a singular influence on their preservation. From the whole learn, That backsliders from the gospel are in a peculiar manner the abhorrence of the soul of God: *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him*.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Observe here, 1. A twofold opposite state, namely, them that *draw back*, and them that *believe*, that is, persevere in believing: *We are not of them that draw back*. Intimating, 1. That in the visible church there ever have been, are, and will be, a number of hypocrites, who, for fear of suffering in a

time of persecution, will draw back. 2. That it is every Christian's duty to evidence to his own conscience, and also to give evidence to others, that he is not of this sort: of number: *We are not of them that draw back.* Observe, 2. A twofold opposite event, perdition on the one hand, and salvation on the other. The first of these is denied, the latter is affirmed, concerning these Hebrews: *We are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.* Where note, 1. The actual influence of apostasy on the one hand to destruction: nothing can free apostates from eternal ruin. Note, 2. The actual influence of faith on the other hand to the saving of the soul. Thence learn, That sincere faith will carry men through all difficulties, hazards, and troubles, unto the certain enjoyment of eternal blessedness. *We are of them that do believe unto the saving of the soul.*

CHAP. XI.

Our apostle having, in the close of the foregoing chapter, spoken of the just men's living by faith, he comes in this chapter to give an excellent description of it, and passes many high encomiums upon it, showing both what it is, and what great things it has done in all ages of the church. From whence we may observe in general, that it is faith alone which, in all ages of the world, under all dispensations of divine grace in and towards the church, hath been the grand vital principle, enabling the saints to live unto God, to obtain the promises, and inherit eternal life, and will continue so to be to the consummation of all things.

NOW faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Observe here, 1. The thing described, or the subject spoken of, and that is, faith; that faith whereby the just man lives, the apostle here speaks of, though not as a justifying, but as it is effectually useful in our whole life, especially unto constancy and perseverance in the Christian profession, which was the great duty urged and enforced in the foregoing chapter. Observe, 2. The description itself, it is the *substance of things hoped for.* 1. That is, it is a confident and firm expectation of the good things which God has promised, giving the good things hoped for a real subsistence in our minds and souls. 2. It is the *evidence of things not seen*; that is, it evidences the reality and certainty of future things, it realizes the invisible realities of another world unto our minds, and causes us to believe them as strongly as what we see with our bodily eyes. Learn hence, That a lively faith gives such a reality, certainty, and present being, to things hoped for,

and yet to come, as if they were visibly seen and actually enjoyed.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

Having in the former verse described faith, in this and the following verses he enters upon the just praise and deserved commendation of this divine and excellent grace, which has such an universal influence into all the parts of the Christian life. In this verse, to commend that faith which he had in the former verse described, he brings in the experience of the elders, or the Old-Testament saints, all true believers from the foundation of the world, who by faith obtained from God a good testimony, recorded in the holy scriptures. *By it*, or through it, as a condition appointed and ordained of God, (not for it, or by the worth and influence of it, as a meritorious cause,) the elders or saints of God from the beginning of the world obtained a good report. Learn hence, 1. That the Old-Testament saints had the same kind of faith that we have, and were saved in the same manner that we are; they had the same promises, the same terms of grace, the same meritorious purchase by the blood of Christ: he is therefore called *the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world*, slain in God's purpose and decree, slain in the types and figures of his death; though his blood was not actually shed, yet was it decreed to be shed, and so was as effectual to them as to us. Learn, 2. That the renown of the Old-Testament saints was their faith, that made them famous: not their priority in living before us, not their longevity in living many years beyond us, not upon the account of their other graces, which yet render them truly excellent, are they said to obtain a good report, but upon the score and account of their faith. Abel was famous for righteousness, Enoch for walking with God, Abraham for obedience, Moses for meekness; but the crown is set upon the head of their faith only: *By it the elders obtained, &c.*

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

The design of the apostle in these words is to prove, that faith satisfies itself in the word of God, concerning the way and manner of the world's creation; for though the world be now visible, and the things contained in it are said to be seen, yet the ori-

ginal framing and making of the world has a principal place among things not seen. Learn hence, That by faith assenting to divine revelation, and not by reason, we understand the truths and wonders, the reasons and causes, the manner and end, of the world's creation. Reason indeed tells us that there was a creation, consequently a Creator; but reason without divine revelation could never have discovered the circumstances and manner of the creation, which wholly depended upon the will of God: reason and nature could never have known them, had not God in his word first revealed them: the old heathens could never determine who made the world, nor when, nor how it was made, nor whence, and out of what it was made. Reason may propound the question, How was the world made, and all things herein? but revelation must resolve it. A poor child learns more by his catechism, than all the philosophers ever learnt by their profound researches and painful studies. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed, it follows by the word of God, that is, both by his external and imperial word, his word of command, saying, Let it be; he spake, and it was done, Psal. xxxiii. 9. And also by his essential and substantial Word, Jesus Christ, by whom God made the worlds, Heb. i. 2, in that order which Moses has historically related. Observe lastly, How and after what manner the world was made, not out of any pre-jacent or pre-existent matter, but out of nothing: that which was not at all, could not be seen: The things that are seen were not made of things that do appear. Here note, That the power of God framed many things out of nothing, as the heaven of heavens, the dwelling place of God and angels, immediately, other things mediately, out of the chaos, that is, such rude, indisposed, and unfit matter as had no disposition to receive such a form as it did actually receive from the power of God, and may therefore deservedly be called a creation out of nothing. Learn hence, That in the work of creation, though other attributes of wisdom and goodness visibly appeared, yet none were so eminently conspicuous as the power of God. Well might St. Paul say, Rom. i. 20. that herein was manifested his eternal power and godhead.*

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.

From a general declaration of the nature of faith in the foregoing verses, our apostle proceeds to give instances of the efficacy and power of faith in particular persons, in this and the following verses. And he begins here with Abel. But why not with Adam? Because Adam was the first sinner, and the greatest of sinners; and although received to grace and mercy, yet after his fall Moses speaks little of him, nothing very notable; neither did Almighty God put that honour upon Adam which he did upon his son Abel; he had the honour to shed his blood for Christ, and for testifying his faith in him: and accordingly Abel is here represented as the first evangelical believer, *By faith, Abel.* Observe farther, 1. The action which Abel performed, he offered sacrifice to God; he offered a sacrifice most excellent, and he offered it by faith. But did not Cain bring his offering of faith too? Yes, no doubt, he believed the being of God, and considered him as a Creator and Preserver, and accordingly offered the fruits of the earth, as an acknowledgment that all these things were made, preserved, and bestowed on man by God. But Abel's faith was fixed on God, not only as a creator, but as a redeemer also, accompanied with a sense of sin and guilt, trusting in the ways of redemption and recovery which God had provided. Here note, That the performance of the outward duties of divine worship, is not the rule of the acceptance of men's persons with God, but a difference and distinction is made from the inward principle, whence those duties do proceed. Cain and Abel both offered sacrifices, but not from a like principle, nor yet for a like end. Observe, 2. The effect and fruit of Abel's faith, it procured a testimony and witness from God himself that he was righteous; he testified that he had respect to his person by the approbation of his offering. Our persons must be justified before our performances can be accepted. God has first respect to the offerer, then to the offering; for the person must recommend the gift, not the gift recommend the person. Observe, lastly, The privilege of Abel's faith: *By it, being dead, he yet speaketh.* Some understand the words in a passive sense, he is spoken of; he being dead there is an honourable mention of him. Religion is the truest honour, and the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. Others in an active sense, and so the words import, that the dead saints do yet speak, and that somewhat worthy to be heard and observed; they speak by the precious grace with which they were enriched; they speak by the

holy life they maintained, by the good works they wrought, by the eminent services they did for God and man, by their sharp trials, by their bitter sufferings; by these they speak, to the honour of religion, and to the furtherance of the gospel. God's Abels, his dead saints, do thus speak when laid in the dust.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death: and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

The second instance is Enoch, concerning whom our apostle affirms that he was translated, and that he was translated by faith; translated from one condition to another; from grace to glory, from earth to heaven. He was gathered by God, both in body and soul, to himself; and in a way of eminent grace and favour freed from death. Hereby God gave the world a convincing testimony, that the body is capable of eternal life and happiness. But how was he translated by faith? *Ans.* Not efficiently: faith was not the efficient cause of his translation. That was an immediate act of divine power; not meritoriously, for it is recorded as an act of sovereign grace and favour: but instrumentally only: he was by faith brought into the state and condition of favour and acceptance with God, as to have this peculiar privilege conferred upon him. Some we find are carried to heaven by special prerogative, by privileged dispensation: *By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death.* But observe farther, What went before this translation, and that was his pleasing God; before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God. Such as would live with God hereafter, must study and seek to please God by walking with him here; would we come where Enoch is, we must walk as Enoch did. There is no hope of living with God in heaven, if we do not please him here on earth.

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Without faith, that is, without justifying faith, without faith in the Messiah, for that is the faith here spoken of, there is no possibility of pleasing God, and if so, then no possibility of being saved without faith. This appears partly from the divine constitution, God has so appointed it, partly from the nature of the thing itself; faith

being the first regular motion of the soul towards God, no works, no duties, no performance, whatsoever, can please God without faith. *He that cometh to God*, that is, hath any access or approach to him in a way of worship, or any access or acceptance into his grace and favour, he must believe, 1. God's being, 2. God's bounty: *that he is, and that he is a rewarder of such as diligently seek him.* Learn hence, 1. That the first point of faith, if we would have any thing to do with God, is firmly to believe that there is a God: *He that cometh to God must believe that he is.* Learn, 2. That the fountain of all obedience and service to God, is a firm belief of his being a rewarder of all them that diligently seek him. Learn, 3. That the whole issue of our finding God when we seek him, depends upon our diligently seeking of him; he is a rewarder of them, of all, and only them, that diligently seek him.

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Observe here, 1. The person spoken of, Noah, an eminent person in the line of the church, and one that walked with God, and found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Observe, 2. What was spoken of him: *He was warned of God*, touching his design and purpose to destroy and drown the old world. Observe, 3. What was the effect of this warning: it produced in Noah fear and obedience; fear of the threatening and obedience to the command; he was moved with fear, and prepared the ark. Observe, 4. The exercise, yea, eminent exercise of Noah's faith: neither the difficulty of the work, nor the length of time, an hundred and twenty years, nor his want of success all that time of preaching, nor the contempt and scorn cast upon him by the whole world, could weaken his hands or discourage his heart, in the least, from going on with his work. Observe, 5. The consequent of Noah's faith and obedience with respect unto the world: *he condemned the world*; not as a judge, properly and authoritatively, but as a witness, by plea and testimony; he condemned it by his doctrine, by his example, and left it altogether without excuse. Observe, 6. The fruit and effect of Noah's faith and obedience with reference to himself; *He became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*: that is of the happiness promised to them who

are justified by faith; he was evidenced and declared to be a righteous person.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

The next illustrious instance of the efficacy of faith we have here in the person of Abraham, who obeyed the call and command of God in leaving his own native country, to go he knew not whither, and to receive an inheritance he knew not when. Where note, 1. The foundation of Abraham's faith and obedience, and that was the call of God; he had an immediate command to go out of his own country into a certain place, with a promise to receive it for an inheritance: *Get thee from thy country, relations, friends, and all outward enjoyments, is a command becoming the greatness of God to give; and self-denial in fact or resolution to comply with such a command from the great God, is the foundation of all sincere profession.* Note, 2. What was the principle of Abraham's obedience in complying with this call of God, and that was his faith: *By faith, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed.* True faith, wherever it is, bringeth forth sincere obedience; these two can no more be separated than the light and the sun, than the fire and heat; obedience is the daughter of faith, and faith the parent and principle of obedience. Note, 3. The difficulty, and therein the excellency, of his obedience; *He obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went.* If faith be once satisfied in the call and command of God, it will follow him when he cannot see a step of its way; over hills and mountains, through dales and vallies, fearing nothing. He that has God's call, need not fear God's conduct.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The apostle spake of the place which Abraham was called from, in the foregoing verse. namely, out of *Ur of the Chaldees*: here he speaks of the place he was called to, *Canaan*, styled the *Land of Promise*, that is, the land which God had newly promised to give unto him. Where note, 1. Abraham's act of obedience: *He sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country; he was there as a sojourner, not an inheritor;*

moving up and down from place to place, until God thought fit to settle him and his posterity. Abraham was a sojourner both in his condition of life, and in his disposition of heart. *Canaan* was a type of heaven, and accordingly Abraham expected a better country, with a city which had foundations, *whose builder and maker is God*. Learn, That the children of God here on earth, where they have best right, and most possessions, are but strangers and pilgrims. Note, 2. The manner of his sojourning in this land, *dwelling in tabernacles.* This was both an act of policy, and an act of piety; of policy, that they might live peaceably, without giving umbrage to the natives, or occasioning any envy or grudge from them; and of piety, to express their hopes and desires of a better country. Note, 3. Abraham's companions, his fellows and followers, in this act of obedience; he sojourned with Isaac and Jacob as heirs of the same promise. Where mark, How all the saints of God are of the same spiritual disposition; they are animated by the same spirit, governed by the same laws; they act from the same principle, and for the same end, and desire nothing more than to live together, and to enjoy God and one another. Note, 4. The reason rendered why Abraham esteemed himself but as a stranger in Canaan, because his thoughts ran much upon heaven, of which Canaan was but a type: *He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* Where observe, 1. Abraham's act of expectation: he looked for it, he rationally expected it; it was not a blind hope, but well built on the power and promise of God. 2. What he looked for, a city, not Jerusalem, an earthly city, as some would have it, for that was not possessed until eight hundred years after, and then only by his posterity for a limited time: but an heavenly city, a settled quiet habitation, a suitable dwelling for them that have had a life of trouble in this world. 3. The city itself described, 1. by the nature of it; it *has foundations*, in opposition to tents and tabernacles, which had no foundations, but were moving, ambulatory dwellings, supported only by stakes and cords; this city is bounded upon the eternal power, the infinite wisdom, and immutable counsel of God. 2. By the maker and builder of it, God, he is the contriver, framer, and erecter of this city; and as he is the maker, so he is the disposer of it also; please God, and he will give it thee, none can give it thee without him, and he will never give it thee without pleasing of him.

11 Through faith also Sarah be-

self received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Our apostle having spoken of Abraham's faith before, makes an honourable mention of his wife Sarah's faith here. It is a blessed thing when husband and wife are one in the faith, as well as one flesh; when the constant companion of our life draws with us in the same yoke of religion. Note, 1. The person whose faith is here commended, *Sarah herself*, a woman, a barren woman, and a barren woman well stricken in age; a woman weak in sex may be strong in faith. Though Sarah at first laughed, yet she afterwards firmly believed. And the apostle takes no notice of the former, but applauds the latter. Oh! with what great indulgence doth God cover the failings of his children, but proclaims aloud their graces to the world! Men do not thus: they will overlook all that is good in others, and report only what is amiss. Sarah's laughing, Rahab's lie, Job's impatience, are not mentioned, but their graces are remembered. Who would not serve such a gracious master, that winks at our failings, but accepts and rewards our weak services and sincere graces? Note, 2. The commendation and fruit of Sarah's faith, she received by it strength and ability for conception; probably she recovered the youthful vigour, and received a general restoration of nature, to an ability for all its primitive operations, which was before decayed by age; she received strength to conceive seed when past age. Learn, That it is the property of faith to expect a blessing absolutely above the use of means, when we have a particular and special warrant from God so to do, as Sarah had in this case. Note, 3. The ground of Sarah's faith, *Because she had judged him faithful that had promised*; that is, she resolved her faith into, and rested upon, the veracity of God in the accomplishment of the promise, which is the proper and immediate object of faith. Learn, That wherever we exercise and put forth faith, we must take care and be sure that we have a promise to exercise it upon, otherwise it is not faith, but fancy; God's promise, and not God's power, is the ground of faith; it is not what God can do, but what he will do, and what he has engaged and promised to do, that is the ground of faith; he can quench all the fire in hell; but where has he said he will do it? *She judged him faithful who had promised.*

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many

as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable.

These words acquaint us with that gratuitous remuneration and gracious reward which God gave Abraham and Sarah, as the fruit of their faith, namely, the blessing of a numerous posterity; there sprang of them, and both of them, *as good as dead*, with reference to the procreation of children, a numerous issue like the stars of heaven, and the sands of the sea. Hence learn, That the God of nature, at his own pleasure, works things above the power of nature in its ordinary efficacy and operations; by weak and dead means he often produces mighty effects. Learn, 2. That whatever difficulties and oppositions lie in the way of the accomplishing of God's promises, they shall have an assured accomplishment on God's part, if faith be kept up in lively exercise on our part.

13 These all died in faith,—

That is, all the before-mentioned saints, Abel, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah, they all died in the faith of the promised Messiah, believing he should come, and expecting salvation by his coming. It is not enough for a Christian to live in the faith, but he must also die in the faith; and to die in the faith is an honourable happy manner of dying; it is a greater happiness to die in the Lord, than to die for the Lord; if a man die for the Lord, and be not in the Lord, he is not blessed in his death: a man may die for the Lord's cause, yet not for the Lord's sake, but out of vain glory.

—Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Observe here, the great trial which the faith of the Old-Testament saints was put unto: they died, *not having received the promises*; that is, they went to their graves before the great blessings God had promised were accomplished. Faith is contented with the promise, though it wants actual possession of the good things promised. God would have believers in all ages of the church to live by faith, and promises not actually performed: and it is a great honour to God, when we are ready to die, to go to the grave with assurance, and to profess our confidence that God will make them good: *These all died not having received the promises.* Yet observe, The actings and exercises of their faith towards these promises, which they had not yet re-

ceived in their accomplishment: 1. They saw them afar off: at a great distance: it is the property of faith to eye the blessings promised at a distance; so that no distance of time or place can weaken faith as to the accomplishment of divine promises. 2. They were persuaded of them: this imports the mind's satisfactory acquiescing in the truth of God for the accomplishing of his promises; a firm persuasion of the truth of God's promises, and a quiet waiting for the accomplishment of them at a great distance, is an eminent fruit of faith. 3. They embraced them; the word signifies, they saluted and hugged them. Whence note, That faith is an act of the will, as well as of the understanding; there is in faith adherence as well as assent; an embracing as well as a persuasion; the heart cleaves to the promise with love, delight, and complacency. And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; so they were in outward condition, wandering from place to place; so they were in affection and disposition, looking upon this world as their pilgrimage, and heaven as their home and proper country, because thence they are born; there lies their inheritance, there are all their kindred, there is their longest abode. Christians should not only account but confess themselves pilgrims, and discover it by their journeying and mending their pace heavenward.

14 For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out they might have had opportunity to have returned; 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.

As if the apostle had said, "They that say such things, namely, that they, even in the land of promise, are pilgrims and strangers, do declare plainly that they seek a country where they may rest and dwell, when this their pilgrimage on earth is ended." Now this country was not Chaldea, but heaven; a glorious city, which God prepared for them, as an abundant recompence for their earthly country, which they left at God's command. Here note, 1. That heaven is the Christian's proper country; they are born from heaven, their conversation is in heaven, their eternal habitation is there; their head and husband, their friends and kindred, are there: and it is theirs by a right of donation, by a right of purchase,

by a right of possession, and by a right of conquest. Note, 2. That this heavenly country is by far the better, yea, the best of countries; best in regard of the safety and security of it; best in regard of the order and government of it; best in regard of the company and society dwelling in it; all saints, none but saints, none but perfect saints: best in regard of the immunities and privileges belonging to it, and in regard of the duration and continuance of it; a country that can never be invaded, never be conquered. Note, 3. That sincere Christians have strong desires after, and vehement longings for, this better, this best of countries: Now they desire a better country: and God is not ashamed to be called their God—they that by their faith give glory to God in acknowledging his faithfulness in this life, he will never be ashamed of them, either in life or at death, or after death. Learn, 1. That it is the privilege, honour, and advantage that any can be made partakers of, that God will bear the name and title of their God. 2. God's owning of believers as his, and of himself to be their God, is an abundant recompence of all the hardships which they undergo in this their pilgrimage. The top and sun of all happiness, is to have the Lord for our God.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises, offered up his only-begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

The next person instanced in, for the fame of his faith, is Abraham who was deservedly styled the father of the faithful; him God tries in a very extraordinary manner, by putting him upon offering up his son Isaac. Where note, That where God gives much grace, he tries grace much; the greater the faith, the greater the trial; strong faith must prepare for strong trials. Here Abraham's faith was tried, whether he would depend upon God's promise above reason; his obedience was tried, whether he would yield to God's command against nature; his love was tried, whether his affection was not more strong to his son than to his God; and his fear was tried, whether he did reverentially acknowledge and stand in awe of God, by adoring his sovereignty and dominion over him. Trials are the best touchstone of faith; without which men will want the best of

deace of its sincerity: and great trials in believers are an evidence of great faith. Observe farther, The excellency of Abraham's faith and obedience upon this trial: *he offered up his son Isaac*: that is, he did it in part, and was ready to have done it thoroughly, had not God countermanded him. Learn hence, that where there is a divine command obliging us to obedience, it is the wisdom and duty of faith to close its eyes against all insuperable difficulties and dangers. Abraham objected not against the horrid nature of the command to kill a son, his own son, his only son, the son of the promise, but deliberately, and upon due consideration, was ready to execute what God required. Lord! what a strong faith was here, fortified with an impregnable resolution, that could make Abraham hold out three days against the violent assaults of his own nature, and the charming presence of his son, enough to melt his heart; yet nothing made him stagger in his duty, but he performs a most miraculous act of obedience, in defiance of all difficulties. Observe, lastly, The fruit and success of Abraham's faith; he believed God could and would raise Isaac from the grave, and he receive him again in a figure as one snatched out of the very jaws of death. There is no such way to enjoy the continuance of an earthly comfort, as by resigning it up to God; *Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure.*

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

Note, That there is a blessing by way of prayer, and a blessing by way of prophecy, foretelling what shall befall persons in time to come; of this kind is Isaac's blessing. The patriarchs were in a peculiar manner directed and guided by God, and their blessing was a conferring of a right to the parties blessed. Thus Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau *concerning things to come*, that is, concerning the great and future things which should happen to their posterity after them. Note here, Esaus, wicked men, have their portion in outward blessings as well as Jacobs, as well as the best and holiest of men; partly, as they are God's creatures, partly as they descend from parents in covenant with God, and partly because they make some profession of the name of God. And God will be behindhand with none, but so far as they do good they shall see good.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph.
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and worshipped, *leaning upon the top of his staff.*

Observe here, in dying Jacob, the frame and carriage of holy men in their dying seasons, to bless their children, and worship their God. Jacob blessed Joseph and his two sons, laying hold on the covenant made with Abraham. It is no small privilege to be born of parents taken into visible covenant with God, and no small comfort, when God comes to take away such parents from us, to have the benefit of their blessings and prayers. Jacob, when dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and as he blessed them, so he worshipped God with religious worship, and in a devout manner, *leaning upon the top of his staff.* Learn hence, That our addresses to God ought to be exceedingly reverent, both as to the frame of our souls, and also to the gesture of our bodies; we cannot always be affectionate in prayer, for affection depends upon the vigorous motions of the bodily spirits; but we should always be reverent and serious in prayer, otherwise it is no worship. Learn farther, That where faith gives a willing mind, bodily infirmities shall be no let and hinderance from duty.

22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

Here we have a two-fold instance of Joseph's faith when dying. 1. *He made mention of the departing of the children of Israel*; he said unto his brethren, *Behold I die, but God shall bring you unto the land which he hath sworn unto your fathers.* See how the good man dies in the faith of the promise. Thence learn, That it is of singular use and great advantage to the church, that such believers as have been eminent in profession, should in their dying moments testify their faith in the promises of God; so did Jacob before, so did Joseph now. The second instance or evidence of Joseph's faith was, that he *gave commandment concerning his bones*; that is, he took an oath of his brethren that they should carry his bones out of Egypt, and bury them in Canaan, thereby owning and professing himself to be of the posterity of Abraham; and thereby also encouraging the faith and expectation of his brethren and their posterity to hope for their deliverance out of Egypt, and to be put into the possession of the promised land; so that it is evident that there was faith, much faith, showed by Joseph in disposing of his bones. The Papists' plea from hence for paying ver

ration to their relics, is weak and contemptible: this was a special charge given in faith to do what was done; and to shut them up in a coffin, and decently bury them was all that was done. Now to take example, from hence, to dig men's bones out of their graves, to enshrine them and place them upon altars, to carry them in procession, to adore them, to ascribe miraculous operations to them, casting out devils and the like, is fond and ridiculous.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw *he was* a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

In these words the faith of Moses's parents is celebrated: the birth of Moses fell out in the very height and fury of Pharaoh's persecution, when the king had given commandment to destroy all the male children; Moses was then born and hid by his parents, and preserved as a deliverer of the church of God. Oh! how blind are all the persecutors and opposers of the church of God! When they think all things secure, and their counsels so deeply laid that God himself cannot deliver out of their hands, then doth the Almighty lay in provision for his church's deliverance, and their destruction. Now was Moses, a deliverer, born and hid. But observe a double cause of Moses' hiding: the first external, *they saw he was a proper child*; they had a persuasion that God would provide a person to be their deliverer; and they saw something divine in Moses to stir up their faith, and raise their expectation, that he might be the person. The second, the internal and moving cause: *They were not afraid of the king's commandment*, or bloody decree. Learn hence, 1. That the commands of kings and princes have oft-times been a very great trial to the children of God; so was Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship the golden image, and such was Pharaoh's command here. Learn, 2. That kings and princes must not be obeyed in things contrary to the word of God: obedience without reserve is to be paid to none but God. *They were not afraid of the king's commandment*.

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in

Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

The next person whom our apostle instances in, is Moses himself, whose faith and self-denial were most evidently conspicuous in all the instances of them. Observe, 1. His great self-denial, with all the enhancing circumstances of it: *When he came to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter*. Note here, 1. The circumstance of time, *When he came to years*; it was no childish act, when he knew not what he did, but when he came to age and understanding; nay, farther, this was when Moses was newly come to age, in the prime and vigour of his time, when he had just began to taste the sweetness of youthful pleasures. The world appears a dead and dry thing in the winter of old age, but looks green and beautiful in the spring of youth: but Moses, when come, just come, to years, refused it. Note, 2. The circumstances of his education; he had been bred from a child in a princely way and manner, he never knew what belonged to a low estate: those that never had much, forsake but little when they forsake all, want will never much pinch those who never understood plenty; but those who have enjoyed fullness all their days, for them to stoop voluntarily from the height of ease and honour, to the depth of affliction and hardship, is admirable. Thus did Moses; he refused honour, and chose affliction. Note, 3. The circumstance of his obligations; Pharaoh's daughter had saved his life, adopted him for her son, given him princely breeding, *He was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*; and set her heart upon him as her own. However, Moses breaks through all, and away he goes. But whither went he? Why, to a company of poor bond-men, labouring at the brick-kilns, to take his lot of suffering with them. Note, 4. The circumstance of his expectations; how very fair and certain a prospect he had of enjoying the crown of Egypt; he did not refuse it because he despaired of attaining it, for he was an adopted heir unto it. Note, lastly, That all this was not a rash and sudden determination, but a deliberate and advised choice, *Acts vii. 23*. St. Stephen said he made this choice *when he was full forty years old*; that is, when he was of ripest judgment, and in the height of prosperity and reputation: he did not only, as Josephus says, at three years old cast a crown, given him for a play-toy, to the ground, and trample it under his feet; but, as the apostle says here, when he came to be a man, he treated it with no more respect, but refused to be called the son of Pha-

Pharaoh's daughter. Behold here Moses' faith, and eminent self-denial, in choosing rather to suffer affliction with the worshippers of the true God, than to gain a kingdom by renouncing God and his holy religion. From whence learn, That faith is a grace which will teach and enable a person openly to renounce all worldly advantages at God's call, when we cannot enjoy them with an upright mind, and a good conscience. *Quest.* But how did Moses come to know his stock and race, that he was an Hebrew born, and not an Egyptian, no son of Pharaoh's daughter? *Ans.* He found himself circumcised, and so belonged to the circumcised people. The token of God's covenant received in infancy, duly considered, is a most effectual means to preserve persons in the profession of the true religion. Add to this, that his mother was his nurse, and continually with him, and probably his father frequently; who being persons fearing God, took care very early to impress him with the principles of the true religion, and with the detestation of the Egyptian idolatry.

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Observe here, 1. The common lot and usual condition of God's people in this world; it is an afflicted state and condition. 2. That wicked men oftentimes enjoy pleasures in the ways of sin, whilst good men meet with much affliction in the work of holiness. 3. That notwithstanding this, all wise and good men do rather choose afflicted godliness, than pleasant and prosperous wickedness. 4. That a spiritual eye can see an excellency in the people of God, when in the lowest suffering condition; will join itself unto them, and appear with them, and for them, though it be with great loss, and much hazard. Moses here chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the short sinful pleasures of Pharaoh's court.

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

The former verse acquainted us with the general choice which Moses made of affliction with the people of God: this acquaints us with one sort and particular kind of affliction which he chose, namely, reproach for Christ; this he counted his glory, his riches, his treasures, beyond all the riches and treasures of Egypt. Note

here, That the people of God have been, and usually are, a people under reproach; not only a persecuted, but a reproached people; the foundation of all sufferings is laid in reproach: this is the cover for all. The Jews by reproaches first stirred up the rage of the people against Christ, before they attempted to take away his life. Note 2. The reproach of good men is the reproach of Christ, because he and they are but one mystical body, and because of the near union that is between them. The reproach of the wife is the reproach of the husband, especially if she be reproached for his sake, and upon his account. Again observe, What an high esteem a gracious person has of reproaches in the cause of Christ, and for the sake of Christ; he esteems them his glory, his treasure, his greatest treasure; he rejoices and takes pleasure in them, and very much values himself by them. Verily no man deserves the name of a Christian until he hath such an esteem of Christ, and value for him, that the worst things in the world, even persecution and reproach, should be preferred by him before the great things of the world, when they stand in competition with him, or in opposition to him. Observe, lastly, The ground of Moses's faith, self-denial, contempt of the world, and all its excellent actions; and that was, the recompence of the reward which he had respect unto: *For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.* Where note, That there is a reward laid up for good men; that it is a lawful, yea, laudable, very expedient, yea, very necessary and needful, for a Christian to eye this reward, and to have respect unto it in the whole course of his obedience; and this doing will be a mighty encouraging motive to undergo all hardships and difficulties in the way of religion: *He had respect unto the recompense of the reward.*

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. **28** Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them. **29** By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

Our apostle having described the faith of Moses, with respect to his sufferings with the people of God, in the former verses, comes now to instance in the power and activity of it, with respect to their de-

liverance, in these verses. Where note, 1. The spiritual fortitude which attended his faith, *He forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king*; even the wrath of the greatest king upon the earth, is to be disregarded, if it lies against our duty to God. Note, 2. The reason or ground of this his fortitude and courage, *He endured as seeing him who is invisible*; that is, he saw him by faith whom he could not see by sense; he saw him in his omnipresence, power, faithfulness, and had a fixed trust in him at all times, and on all occasions. Learn hence, That there is nothing insuperable to faith, whilst it can keep a clear view of the power of God, and the promise of God. Note, 3. The commendation of Moses's faith, from a due observation of a double ordinance of worship, namely, *the passover, and the sprinkling of blood*. As to the former, Moses's faith in keeping the passover had respect to its divine institution, to the command for its perpetual observance, to the sacramental nature of it, to the mystical or typical signification of it. Learn hence, That a vigorous and lively exercise of faith is always required unto the right and due celebration of a sacramental ordinance; *By faith he kept the passover*; it follows,—*and the sprinkling of blood*. This was a temporary ordinance and observation annexed to the first celebration of the passover, not repeated afterwards; the sprinkling of the blood on the side posts of their houses, was a token that the destroying angel should pass over those houses, and that none should be destroyed in them; but this rite, though it ceased with the first passover, yet it abides for ever in its mystical signification; God hereby teaching us, that unless we are sprinkled with the blood of Christ, our paschal lamb, no other privilege can secure us from the displeasure of God, and everlasting destruction; *By faith he kept the passover, and sprinkling of blood*, verse 28. Note, 4. A farther instance of the power and efficacy of Moses's faith in passing through the Red Sea, verse 29. probably he entered first into the sea, at the head of the people himself, both to conduct them, and to encourage them; the water doubtless was raised to a very great height on both sides of them; and though they were a wall unto them, yet it was a mighty act of faith to put themselves between such walls as were ready every moment to fall upon them, had they not been under an Almighty restraint. Learn hence, That faith will overcome all fears and dangers, and find a way through a sea of difficulties, under the call and at the command of God. But how came it to pass that the

Egyptians, going in the same path through the Red Sea, were drowned in which the Israelites were preserved! *Ans.* The Egyptians entering in was an act of presumption; the Israelites, was an act of faith; God commanded the Israelites to go through; now as faith gives courage to obey God in difficult duties, so it gives encouragement to hope that safety shall evermore accompany duty.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were encompassed about seven days.

After the faith of Moses and the Israelites at the Red Sea, we have here the faith of Joshua and the Israelites before Jericho, recorded and related. Jericho was a walled and well-fenced city, and a frontier town, that kept them from entering into Canaan. God commanded them not to fight, but to walk, to go round the city seven days, and he would give them an unexpected entrance into it; they believe and obey, and the success was according to their desire: *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, &c.* Here note, 1. The grace exercised, *faith*: they believed God upon his word, they enter Canaan at this frontier town; God remembers his promise, and disappoints not the faith and expectation of his people. Note, 2. The readiness and exactness of the people's obedience; they compassed the town so many days, they do what God commands, and no more; here is no mount raised, no engine planted, no sword drawn, they only walk, not fight. Doubtless the men of Jericho made themselves merry with this sight, and said one to another, "What, will these men beat down our city with their eyes? Will they conquer us only by gazing upon us?" And farther, as the army only must encompass the city, so must the priests blow the rams'-horns; a contemptible mean! had they made use of the silver trumpets of the sanctuary, that had been a good ground to hope for success, they being the symbols and sacred signs of God's presence with them; but verily trumpets of rams'-horns seemed more fit to move laughter, than to do execution; yet assuredly no ram of iron could have been so forcible for battery as these rams'-horns, when God had appointed them. It is the praise of omnipotency oftentimes to work improbabilities. Note, 3. The event and success which followed their faith, and accompanied their obedience, *The walls of Jericho fell down*. Nothing can stand before the power of God, and the faith of his people. If we will believe God's promises, and execute his commands, we need no shifts nor artifices.

no power nor policy of our own, to work deliverance for us. Learn hence, That when faith makes use of the means prescribed by God, though it cannot discern what influence the means can have to the end aimed at, yet the issue and event shall certainly be according to God's appointment and faith's expectation; *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after, &c.*

31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

Observe here, 1. The person spoken of, Rahab, a Gentile, an Amorite, an harlot, who kept a victualling house in Jericho, and so was both harlot and hostess, defiled both in body and mind, with idolatry and adultery. 2. What is spoken of her; she believed: *By faith Rahab, &c.* She was converted to God before the spies came to her, by what she had heard of him and his mighty works. Behold here a blessed instance! 1. Of the sovereignty and freedom of God's grace. 2. Of the power and efficacy of divine grace, in calling and converting a person given up by her own choice to the vilest of sins, even to the ravings of lust; but no sinner nor sin is to be despaired of, in whose cure sovereign grace is engaged. Observe, 3. The effect and fruit of her faith, *She received the spies with peace*; that is, entertained them safely, concealed them, gave them intelligence, exposed herself to danger in the conveyance of them; an eminent fruit, a special evidence, and an high demonstration of her faith: indeed she told an officious lie; but God pardoned it, and the apostle here makes no mention of it; the Holy Ghost lays, as it were, the finger upon the scar, and covers it out of sight, contrary to the practice of the malignant world, who overlook all the good, and reflect only upon the evil of an action; whereas God takes notice of the good, but passes by the evil. Observe, 4. The benefit and advantage she received by her faith; she perished not: that is, when the credulous and idolatrous people of Jericho were destroyed, she and her family were preserved. From the whole learn, 1. That God is ready to show wonderful mercy to penitent sinners, if they return to him and believe in him, how great soever their sins have formerly been. Learn, 2. That true faith, wherever it is, will show itself by some eminent effect, and notable fruits of it. Learn, 3. That the rewards of faith are excellent and truly glorious: as she was preserved from the common ruin at Jericho, so shall all believers be saved

from that wrath and destruction which shall come ere long upon the impenitent and unbelieving world.

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae: of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens; 35 Women received their dead raised to life again:—

In these and the following verses, our apostle sums up the remaining testimonies which he might have produced, to show the great things which faith had assisted persons to do, and also enabled them to suffer the hardest and most terrible things that could be encountered with: in the verses now before us, an account is given us of the great things of all sorts which faith has enabled to do; particularly it was faith that made them fearless whom God raised up, in the days of the Judges, to conflict with the enemies of the church; it was faith that assisted them in the combat, and rendered them victorious in the conflict; it was faith rendered Gideon successful over the Midianites. Barak over the Canaanites, Samson over the Philistines, Jephthah over the Amorites, David over the Jebusites and Moabites; it was faith in the promise of God that made them courageous, and rendered them victorious; there is nothing so great, so difficult, or seemingly insuperable, that should hinder us from acting faith in all things, even things more great and excellent than the conquest of earthly kingdoms. Observe next, Our apostle having enumerated the persons believing, he now reckons up the noble acts and honourable achievements of their faith: *Through faith they subdued kingdoms*: so did Joshua subdue all the kingdoms in Canaan, and David all the kingdoms about it, viz. Moab, Ammon, Edom, Syria, and the Philistines; these were subdued by faith, because what they did was in obedience to God's command, and in the accomplishment of his promises, for he had given all those kingdoms by promise to the Israelites, before they were subdued by them: thus they are said

to subdue kingdoms by faith. Yet note, That they made use of all other heroic virtues besides faith; courage, valour, military skill, and military stratagems: faith excites all graces and virtues, and puts them in motion. *Wrought righteousness*; they executed the judgments of God on the enemies of the church, and administered justice impartially to all that were under their rule and government, and this working righteousness is a fruit of faith, for unbelief is the cause of all the injustice and oppression that is in the world. *Obtained promises*; that is, the good things promised; so did Abraham by faith obtain a promised son, Joshua a promised Canaan, David a promised kingdom; but there was a great space of time between the promise and the performance, which put their faith sometimes hard to it. *Stopped the mouths of lions*: thus Daniel, chap. vi. because he believed in his God, ver. 23, and the faith which heretofore stopped the mouths of lions, can stop the rage of the most savage oppressors and persecutors, whenever God pleases. *Quenched the violence of fire*; so did the three children's faith, Dan. iii. not a hair of their head was singed: they knew not which way God would deliver them, but they committed themselves to the omnipotency and sovereignty of God in the discharge of their duty, with a full persuasion that one way or other he would deliver them.—*Escaped the edge of the sword*; as did David the sword of Goliath and Saul, though sometimes his fear prevailed that he should one day perish by the sword of Saul. Fear may be in cases of danger, and yet faith at the same time have the principal conduct of the soul: by faith David escaped the edge of the sword; so did the Jews the sword of Haman, and Elijah the sword of Jezebel. *Out of weakness were made strong*; some apply this to Gideon and his three hundred men, Judges vii. 15. others to Hezekiah, who by the power of faith, was in a wonderful manner recovered and restored from a desperate sickness to perfect health, Isa. xxxviii. *Waxed valiant in fight*; so did Joshua, Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, and David, who through faith in the promise, and of the presence of God with them, feared neither the number nor strength of their enemies. David often declares that God girded him with strength to the battle, and taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight; so that though an host encamped against him, yet his heart was not afraid. *Turned to fight the armies of the aliens*; those aliens were the heathens and idolaters, Philistines and Midianites, who were enemies to Israel, and to the God of Israel, and they made them fly, and turn their backs; for as they

fought for God out of a principle of faith, so God fought for them according to the faithfulness of his promise, which was the ground of their confidence and courage. *Women received their dead raised to life again*: this is applied to the widow of Zerephath, and the Shunamite, 2 Kings iv. 36. 1 Kings xvii. 23. they were raised by the prophets' faith, and received by their mothers, when raised, with joy and thankfulness. These ten instances did the apostle select and choose out of many, to give of the great things that had been done through faith, thereby to assure the Hebrews, and us with them, that there is nothing too hard nor difficult for faith to effect, when it is set on work and managed according to the power of God.

—And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance: that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 And others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins: being destitute, afflicted, tormented: 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing verses, acquainted the Hebrews with the great things which faith enabled the Old-Testament saints to do, he now lays before them an account of the hard and difficult things which faith enabled them to suffer, and here reckons up the sharpest and bitterest sufferings that human nature perhaps can be exposed to; but to do the greatest things, and to suffer the hardest, is all one to faith. Faith stands ready for both, as God shall call. Observe here in general, That the evils enumerated are of such various sorts and kinds as to comprise every thing that may befall believers on the account of their Christian profession. Do we meet with temptations, scorns, and mockings, scourgings, bonds, imprisonments, yea, death itself, by all sorts of tortures and extremities?—This is our encouragement, that others in the cause of God have undergone them, and been carried victoriously through them: but the particulars in this little book of martyrs follow. *Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance*. In this passage, and several others here following, the apostle

is concluded to refer to the story in the Maccabees, which though written after the closing of the canon of the scripture, when there was no extraordinary prophet in the church, yet the matters of fact were then fresh in memory, and are here alluded to, particularly Eleazar, 2 Mac. vi. 28. who was beaten to death, when he had been persuaded and allured to accept deliverance by transgressing the law; and also the mother and her seven sons, they expected a *better resurrection*, better than what their persecutors offered them, even a glorious resurrection of their bodies at the last day. Others had trial of cruel mockings, as Micahiah, 1 Kings, xxii. 24. and others; and scourging, as Jeremiah, chap. xx. 2. &c. and xxxvii. 15. Also bonds and imprisonments, as Joseph in Egypt, and Jeremy in the dungeon; some were stoned, as Zacharias the son of Jehoiada, 2 Chron. xxiv. 21. Others sawn asunder, as Isaiah under the tyranny of Manasseh; others were tempted with fair promises and great rewards, but refusing, were slain with the sword. Learn hence, That torments in the cause of religion have been a very old invention of the devil and the world, and they have placed great hopes of prevailing by them; but no instruments of cruelty, no endeavours of hell, shall ever prevail against the faith of God's elect. They wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented. This some refer to Elijah, who was destitute, and fed by ravens, 1 Kings, xvii. 4. but it has been the portion of many of God's faithful servants to be driven from their habitations, sometimes by the cruelty of the laws, sometimes by force and violence. Of whom the world was not worthy: that is, the men of the world think the saints of God not worthy to live amongst them, whereas the world is not worthy of such excellent company: and therefore as soon as their work is done, God removes them. Learn hence, 1. That God's esteem of his people is never the less because of their outward sufferings and calamities, whatever the world judgeth of them: they esteem them the filth of the world, and the obscuring of all things; but God is of another mind. Learn, 2. Let the world think as highly and as proudly of itself as it pleases, God thinks it at all times, but especially when it persecutes his people, base, and unworthy of their society. They wandered in deserts and mountains: behold here the state and condition of some of the servants of the living God, who, when driven from all inhabited places, took up their lodgings in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. Learn hence, That oft-times it is much better and more

safe for the saints of God to be in a wilderness, among the beasts of the fields, than in a savage world inflamed by the devil into rage and persecution.

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

That is, "All the fore-mentioned scripture saints, with others that lived from the beginning of the world, and the first giving out of the promise of the Messiah, Gen. iii. 15. all and every one of these obtained a good report through faith, that is, a good testimony that they pleased God; nevertheless they received not the promise, that is, the actual exhibition of the promise, Christ, the promised Messiah; the promise, they had, but not the thing promised, this was not in their days exhibited, Christ was not then come in the flesh: this promise was made by God to the elders from the beginning, but not actually accomplished until the fulness of time." Learn hence, That the Old-Testament saints had from the beginning the promise of God concerning the exhibition of Christ in the flesh for the redemption of the world; which promise they were persuaded of the truth of, embraced it with desire, longing for the actual accomplishment of it, and thus enjoyed the benefit of it as well as we.

40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

The better thing here spoken of is the coming of Christ in the flesh. Lord! what were we, and how are we better than they, that this better thing should be reserved for us? They saw the promise afar off, we enjoy it at hand, "Jucundius est spectare, quam expectare bonum." That they without us should not be made perfect; without us, is as much as, without the things which are actually exhibited unto us. God never intended or designed that the infant condition of the church should be made perfect before the exhibition of Christ; that is, that they should be justified and saved by any sacrifices or services done in their time, but looking to the sacrifices and satisfaction of Christ, whereby both they and we are perfected. Learn hence, That it is Christ alone who was to give perfection and consummation to his church; all the outward glorious worship of the Old Testament, though it pleased God, yet had no perfection in it; this God reserved for our times, that they without us should not be made perfect.

CHAP. XII.

This chapter contains an application of the doctrine delivered and confirmed in the foregoing chapter, in which our apostle having pressed the Christian Hebrews to perseverance in the faith, and patience under the heaviest sufferings for the sake of their holy profession, by laying before them several instances of the Old-Testament saints, who by the help of their faith did such great service for God, and endured such great sufferings from the world; he comes now to reinforce his exhortation to patience and constancy in the cause of Christ, from the testimony before insisted on, with new additional motives, encouragements, and directions, in the chapter before us, in which he thus bespeaks them:

WHEREFORE, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

As if our apostle had said, "Seeing we, who are now called forth to suffer, have before us so many instances of the faithful, who like a cloud of witnesses have gone before us, and by the help of their faith conquered all impediments that lay in the way of their salvation, let us take encouragement from them to quit ourselves like men; and, as runners in a race, let us cast off all worldly encumbrances which will entangle us, and avoid all sin, especially a bosom corruption, which easily besets us, and as easily overcomes us, and let us run with patience and perseverance the race of Christianity set before us." Note, 1. That the Old-Testament saints are here called *witnesses, a cloud of witnesses*, and *a cloud encompassing us*; they are witnesses of this grand truth, namely, that faith will carry believers safely through all that they may be called to do and suffer in the profession of the gospel; they are called *a cloud of witnesses*, partly for their number, there being a great multitude of them; partly for their direction, there being a leading virtue in them. As there was a cloud that went before the children of Israel to lead them in the wilderness, so this cloud of witnesses leads us up and down in the wilderness of this world, in the darkest night of our sorrows and sufferings; and they are said to encompass us, because the scripture everywhere encompasses us with them, so that we can be in no suffering state or condition, be it never so sad, but we may turn our eye, and behold the face of some or other of these worthies looking upon us, and encouraging of us to patience and perseverance; and therefore to faint in our profession, whilst we are encompassed with such a cloud of

witnesses, is a great aggravation of our sin. Learn hence, That it is a special honour which God puts upon his saints departed, especially such as suffered and died for the truth, that even after their death they are witnesses to faith and obedience in all generations: *We are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.*

—Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;—

Note here, 1. Christianity is a race, a race set before us by God, and it is our duty faithfully and perseveringly to run it. Note, 2. That in order to the running of this race, all impediments must be laid aside: *Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us.* By every weight, is generally understood the world, its riches, honours, pleasures, preferments, which oft-times are a peculiar obstruction to constancy and perseverance in the profession and practice of Christianity; this dead weight must be *laid aside*, by mortifying our hearts and affections towards the world, for it is inordinate love to these things which gives them their weight and encumbrance; where this grace is in its due exercise, the world cannot influence the mind into any disorder, nor make it unready for its race. By the *sin which doth so easily beset us*, some understand all sin in general, others a bosom-beloved sin in special, others timorousness and fear in particular; all softness and tenderness, with respect to suffering. In the original words, rendered *easily beset us*, some think there is an allusion to the long garments worn in the eastern countries; which, dangling about a man's heels, unfit him for running a race. As a man that has a burden on his back, or a long garment hanging down to his heels, is altogether unfit to run a race; so unready are they for the spiritual race, who are entangled with the love of the world, or with any sinful compliances. Note, 3. That patience is a grace very necessary to enable a person to run the race of Christianity which God has set before him. *Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.* Such is the inevitableness and unavoidableness of the Christian's trials, such the multiplicity and variety of them, such the long duration and continuance of them, that there can be no perseverance without patience. Note, 4. The way discovered, and the means declared, how and by which we attain this grace and patience, namely,

by looking unto Jesus. Learn hence, That looking unto, and beholding of Christ in his patience, is a notable mean to excite and stir us up to the practice and performance of our duty. Note, 5. The special title given here to Christ, he is styled *the author and finisher of faith* in his people; he is deservedly styled the *author* of our faith, because his holy doctrine is the foundation of our faith, because his holy ordinances are special means of faith, and his Holy Spirit the producer of faith in the souls of his people, and his precious blood the purchaser of faith and all grace for his people. And he is the *finisher* of our faith too, as well as the author of it, inasmuch as he has by his promise engaged to perfect what he has begun, Phil. i. 6. *Being confident of this very thing, that he that hath begun a good work in you will perform it, &c.* And inasmuch as he doth by his intercession plead with the Father for the believer's preservation in faith, and perseverance in holiness unto the end: *I have prayed that thy faith fail not*, Luke xxii. 32.

—Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle, having propounded the example of suffering saints before, to provoke them to patience and constancy under their tribulations, he propounds now the example of a suffering Saviour, and bids them *consider him*: *Qualis sit*, compare his sufferings with your own, consider who he was, and who you are: Was not he the Son of God? Had not he all glory and power in his hand? Yet he *endured*, &c. consider him therefore. Learn hence, That the frequent consideration of Christ in his sufferings, is the best mean to keep up faith, and encourage patience under our own sufferings. Observe, 2. How our apostle particularly enumerates the sufferings which our Lord Jesus underwent: *he endured the contradiction of sinners*; that is, the great opposition made to his doctrine, the slander cast upon his miracles, the indignities offered to his person, the malicious and unwearied attempts against his life. Next, he endured the pain of the cross, and despised the shame of the cross. Pain and shame are the two constituent parts of all outward sufferings, and they were both eminent in the

death of the cross; no death more cruel and painful, no death more opprobrious and disgraceful, and never did this appear in any person's death, to that degree of extremity as in the death of Christ; yet he patiently endured them with an holy composure of soul, without reviling the villainous Jews, or threatening them with that vengeance and destruction which it was in his power to have brought upon them every moment. Lord! never any example of patient suffering like to thine, nor can any equal to it be given in human nature. Learn hence, That the manner of Christ's enduring sufferings, particularly pain and shame, ought to be continually before us, that God may in some measure be glorified by us, according thereunto, when we are called into a suffering condition. Observe, 3. What it was that carried Christ through his sufferings: it was *the joy that was set before him*; that is, say some, his glorious exaltation; rather the prospect of that glory which would redound to God and his church by his patient suffering. The glory of God, and the salvation of mankind, were now set before him, and he valued them above life, honour, reputation, and ease, and every thing that was dear unto him. Accordingly it was called *his pleasure*, Isa. liii. 10. Learn hence, that herein is Christ our great example, in that he was influenced and actuated, in all that he did and suffered, by a constant respect to the glory of God, and the salvation of his people: *For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, &c.* Note, 4. The reward of our Lord's patient sufferings declared; he is therefore *set down at the right hand of the throne of God*. God's throne implies his majesty and power; the right hand of his throne implies the highest honour, dignity, and power, next to God. Christ's advancement, above angels and all creatures, is hereby intimated; this glorious estate was the great reward of his sufferings. *He became obedient unto death*, therefore God thus highly exalted him. Observe, lastly, The advantage we shall reap and receive by eyeing Christ in, and imitating his patience under, all our sufferings; it will prevent our being wearied and faint in our minds. Learn hence, That such sufferings may befall us in the way of our profession, as may cause us to faint and grow weary. 2. That when we do begin to faint and grow weary under sufferings, it is our duty to look unto Jesus, and consider him as an example of the greatest patience and constancy of mind: *Look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and consider him who endured—that ye be not weary nor faint.*

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Here the apostle subjoins another reason why the Hebrews should be reconciled to a suffering condition; because what they had already suffered was but a flea-bite, compared with what Christ and the fore-mentioned cloud of witnesses suffered; he and they resisted unto blood, which you never yet did: *Ye have not resisted unto blood, &c.* By blood is meant death and loss of life; though they had resisted bravely, and suffered manfully, yet their lives were safe. Learn hence, 1. That such as are engaged in the Christian profession have no security, but that they may be called forth to the utmost sufferings, even to the sealing of it with their blood. Learn, 2. That whatever befalls us on this side, blood is to be looked upon as a fruit of divine tenderness and mercy towards us. Learn, 3. It is highly dishonourable to faint in the cause of Christ and the gospel, under lesser sufferings, when we know there are greater to be undergone by ourselves and others on the same account. Learn, 4. That it is a noble struggle to resist even unto blood, in opposing sin, and striving against it; both in striving against the sin which others commit, and in striving against the sin which others by promises or threatenings would tempt us to commit. O how honourable a warfare is it to be engaged against such an enemy as sin is! *Striving against sin.*

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation, which speaketh unto you as unto children,—

As if he had said, "By growing weary and faint in your minds, you will plainly show and evidently declare, that you have forgotten that exhortation which God gives, *Prov. iii.*" The want of a diligent consideration and due remembrance of God's promises, recorded in scripture for our encouragement unto duty, and support under difficulties, is very sinful, and of dangerous consequence unto our souls. *Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you,—*

—My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him;

Note here, 1. A sweet and endearing compellation, *My son.* Learn hence, That good men, when under the greatest trials and heaviest afflictions, are God's sons; he calls them sons, and he deals with them as with sons. Note, 2. The nature of the saints' afflictions declared; not judgments, but chastisements, and fatherly rebukes;

the original word signifies such a correction as a father gives a child for his instruction, and bringing him to a sense of his duty. Learn hence, That all the afflictions which God lays upon his children are not the effects of his vindictive anger, but the fruits and effects of his paternal love. Note, 3. A cautionary direction given against two very dangerous extremes in the time of affliction, namely, despising correction, and fainting under it. It is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour, of all the children of God, when under his fatherly hand, to take care that they neither despise his chastisements, nor faint under them. When God has taken away one of our comforts, to say, "Let him take all if he will; if my children must die, let them die; if my estate must go, let it go;"—this is to despise. God cannot bear to see us bear his hand thus lightly. The other extreme is fainting: if when goods are taken away, the heart is taken away, and when relations die, the spirit of a person dies with them: *Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint, &c.*

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

A reason is given in these words, why we should not faint under divine chastisements, because God chasteneth every one whom he loves. Here note, That love is antecedent unto chastening, and that chastening is consequential unto love. Note, 2. That divine love and fatherly chastenings are inseparable; *whom he loveth*, that is, whomsoever he loveth, *he chasteneth*, none goes free. Note, 3. That no person then has any reason to complain of his portion of fatherly chastisements, seeing it is the constant way and manner of God's dealing with his children. Note, 4. That in and under all our chastisements, the resignation of ourselves to the sovereign pleasure and infinite wisdom of God, is the only means to preserve us from fainting and weakness.

7 If ye endure chastening, God deal-eth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

Observe, 1. He does not say, if ye be chastised, but *if ye endure chastisements*, *God deal-eth with you as with sons*; if ye endure them with faith and patience, with submission and perseverance, so as not to faint under them. Learn hence, That a patient

endurance of chastisements is of great price in the sight of God, as well as of singular use and advantage unto us. Afflictions and chastisements are no pledges or assurances of our adoption, but when and where they are endured with patience. Observe farther, from those words, *What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?* 1. That every one of God's sons, more or less, stands in need of his fatherly chastisements. 2. That God is very careful, as a wise and tender father, to correct and chasten all his children. 3. That God, in correcting of his children, dealeth with them as with sons: he is the world's sovereign but the believer's father; as he is the governor of the world, he treats men righteously in his judgments; as he is the father of believers, he treats them graciously in afflictions. Observe again from those words, *If ye be without chastisement, wherof all are partakers,* (that is, all sons are partakers,) That all true children are under God's fatherly discipline, and all that are not under his discipline are not his children, *then are ye bastards and not sons.* Learn hence, 1. That God's family or visible church in this world, has some bastards in it; sons that may have gifts and outward enjoyments, but are not heirs, and have no right to the heavenly inheritance. Learn, 2. That this is a great evidence of it, that they are not the genuine sons of God, because they go unchastised; not that they are altogether without affliction, for they are in trouble like other men, but they are not sensible of divine chastisement in their afflictions, they do not receive them, bear them, and improve them, as such, but are impaired by their afflictions, rather than improved by them; they come cankered out of the furnace, and leprous out of Jordan; affliction, that should refine them from their dross, and purify them from their filth, boils their scum and impurity more into them. Learn, lastly, That a joyous state of freedom from affliction, is such as we ought to watch over with great jealousy and fear, lest it should be a leaving us out of the discipline of the family of God; not that we may desire afflictions as such, much less excruciate and torment ourselves; but we may pray that we may not want any pledge of our adoption, leaving the ordering and disposal of all things to the will of God.

9 Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10

For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure: but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness.

These words are a fresh argument to persuade christians to a patient enduring of divine chastisements; the argument is drawn from the less to the greater, thus: "If our earthly parents chastened us only for a few days, and after their own pleasure, and yet we were subject to them, how much more ought we to be subject to God our heavenly Father, who chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness?" Note here, 1. Earthly parents do and may chastise the children of their flesh, and they ought to reverence them for so doing, and pay a reverential submission for their parental chastisement. Note, 2. That the motive of, and rule which parents too often follow in correcting of their children, is their own will and pleasure: they have frequently a greater regard to their own passions, than to their children's advantage, and correct oftener in humour than in reason; erring sometimes in the matter, sometimes in the manner, sometimes in the measure, of their correction. Note, 3. That great is the difference between divine and parental chastisements. 1. In their author; one is the father of our flesh, the other of our souls and spirits, they are the immediate product of his power, which is a fundamental reason for our patient submission to God, in and under all afflictions. 2. In their end; the one for their own pleasure, the other for his children's profit, to make them partakers of his holiness, by renovation, sanctification, and mortification: the carrying on of these things in us, is that which God designs in all his chastisements. Learn hence, that we can have no greater pledge and assurance of divine love in afflictions than this, that God by them brings us nearer to himself, and makes us more like himself; if under divine chastisements we find no increase of holiness, they are utterly lost, and we have nothing but the trouble and sorrow of them. Note, lastly, The duty we owe to God, the Father of spirits, and that is, subjection, together with the benefit and advantage of it: by being in subjection to the Father of spirits, we shall live. Now this subjection unto God, consists in an acquiescence in his right and sovereignty to do what he will with his own, in an acknowledgment of his wisdom and righteousness in all his dealings with us, in a mighty sense of his care and love, and in an entire resignation of ourselves to his holy will in all things. And behold the

advantage and benefit of this subjection to God in our chastisements; we shall live a spiritual life on earth, and an eternal life in heaven. The rebellious son, under the law, that refused subjection to his earthly parent, was stoned to death, see *Deut. xxi. 18.* and died without mercy; but they who yield subjection to God in their chastisements shall live and not die.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Our apostle in these words seems to obviate an objection against a compliance with his exhortation to bear divine chastenings with silence and submission; and this is taken from the trouble and sorrow wherewith chastisement is accompanied; this he takes for granted is so, but takes off all the weight of the objection, by opposing the benefits of affliction thereunto. Learn hence, 1. That all afflictions for the present are grievous to the flesh, and painful to human nature. Learn, 2. That though afflictions are grievous, yet their fruits are gracious to a believer; God in his sovereign wisdom doth so dispose and manage his people's afflictions, that he makes them end in an happy fruit, even in the fruits of holiness and sanctification; and after affliction has done its work, and wrought kindly, God comes in with comfort and joy, and cheering cordials follow bitter physic. Observe farther, How the benefit of chastisement is expressed in a threefold gradation. Affliction yieldeth *fruit*; it is no dead and dry thing, but this rod blossoms and brings forth almonds. The fruit it yieldeth is *the fruit of righteousness*, namely, patience, submission to the will of God, weanedness from the world, mortification of sin, purity of heart, holiness of life, farther readiness and greater fitness for suffering; these are the sweet fruits which God enables his to gather from the sour tree of affliction. And this fruit of righteousness, which affliction yields, is *peaceable fruit*, because it is a pledge and evidence of our peace with God, and because it brings peace into our own minds. By these fruits of righteousness our hearts are quieted, our minds composed, all tumults allayed, and we enabled to possess our souls in patience. O happy fruit of affliction! blessed is the man whom thou chastisest. Observe lastly, Who they are that are blessed with these special benefits of afflictions, only those that are exercised thereby. The original

word is an allusion to those in the public games, who stripped themselves naked, and put forth all their strength for mastery. To be exercised by chastisements, is to have all our spiritual strength put forth, all our faith and patience tried to the utmost. Learn hence, that a Christian can never find any benefit in chastisements, unless he be exercised by them, that is, unless his graces be stirred up by them to an holy and constant exercise, for hereby alone do they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees: 13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

As if our apostle had said "Seeing so glorious fruits spring from sanctified afflictions be not dejected in mind, nor suffer fear to seize upon you, which weakens the hands, and enfeebles the knees, and causes them to smite one against another; but be resolute for God, make straight paths in the way of Christianity, not stepping once out of it to avoid persecution, lest they who are already lame and feeble, the weak and wavering Christians, be disheartened, and moved by your example to turn out of the way, but let them rather by your constancy be confirmed in their Christian course." Learn hence, 1. That in the running of our spiritual race, we must put forth our utmost strength and activity; but where the course is long and difficulties great, we are apt to grow weary and despond, our *hands hang down*, and our *knees grow feeble*. Learn, 2. That faintness and weariness in duty, dejection and despondency as to success, and great evils, and of fatal consequence unto others as well as ourselves, which therefore we must with all intention of mind watch against; *Lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees*. Learn, 3. That negligence and careless walking in time of prosperity, and pusillanimity and weakness in time of trial, is a great mean of turning aside those that are lame and weak out of the paths of visible holiness: *Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way*. Learn, 4. That the sight and due consideration of a Christian's courage and constancy, will tend very much to the healing of the weak and lame Christians whilst they are in the way, whose recovery, when quite turned out, will be very difficult, if not impossible. —*Let it rather be healed.*

14 Follow peace with all men, and

holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Our apostle having now finished his exhortation unto patient perseverance in the profession of the gospel under all sufferings and afflictions, he now proceeds to a prescription of practical duties incumbent upon Christians at all times in the daily course of their conversation, two of which are contained in this verse, namely to *follow peace and holiness*; the former contains our duty to man, the latter, our duty to God. Here observe, that both duties are enjoined in one and the same precept, and also with one and the same penalty: *Without which*, that is, without following of both which, without pursuing and endeavouring after both, *no man shall see the Lord*. Indeed, if a person follows holiness, though he cannot obtain peace, he may see God provided he pursues peace, and the fault is none of his that he doth not find it; but if he does not pursue peace, though he pretends never so much to holiness, he cannot be happy, for a Christian must be of a peaceable as well as of a pious conversation; peace and holiness, peaceableness and purity, are here joined together, and he neither can be happy in this or the next world, that puts them asunder. Observe farther, The manner how peace and holiness must be followed, namely, with intense endeavours: the original word imports a vehement pursuit, a metaphor taken from huntsmen, who follow the chase, and pursue their game though it flies before them; if peace be had, though it be upon hard terms, we must endeavour to secure it, for it can never be bought too dear, if it be not purchased by sin and baseness. A frame and disposition of seeking peace with all, is eminently suited unto the doctrine and grace of the gospel. A froward spirit, ready for strife and contention, easily provoked, and retaining long a sense of injuries, is directly contrary to the spirit and temper of the gospel. Observe likewise, How that holiness towards God must be accompanied with peaceableness towards man. It is evangelical holiness which is here required; which must be an inward holiness, an universal holiness, a sincere and real holiness, an humble and self-denying holiness, a growing and progressive holiness, a constant and persevering holiness, and such a holiness towards God as is always accompanied with righteousness towards men. Observe lastly, The absolute necessity of holiness in order to eternal blessedness, *Without it no man shall see the Lord*. The future sight of God in glory depends

presumptory on our present holiness, not as the meritorious cause of it, but as a necessary qualification and preparation for it, and as it is the indispensable condition of our obtaining of it. The soul is by holiness made meet and fit for the enjoyment of God in happiness, Col. i. 12. Lord! how miserably mistaken will they be, who expect to see God to their comfort hereafter, who have lived and died in an unholy state here!

15 Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God: lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled:

Our apostle having declared what our duty is with respect to ourselves, in the foregoing verses here acquaints us, how much it is our duty to take care of and watch over others, to do what in us lies, that none may fall short of the grace of God, that is, fall from the grace of God and the profession of Christianity; so that it is very plain, that apostasy is the sin here pointed at, their falling back from Christianity to judaism, for fear of persecution; this is deservedly called a *root of bitterness springing up* according to Deut. xxix. 18. *A root that beareth gall and wormwood*. Learn hence, 1. That looking diligently unto the good of others, and to prevent their falling into sin, especially into the sin of apostasy, is a duty we are obliged to by the light of nature, and the royal law of love. Learn, 2. That the root of apostasy from God, and the profession of Christianity, may abide invisibly in and among eminent professors of religion. It is here called a *root*, because at the beginning it is hidden in the hearts of men, and cannot be discovered until it springs up; and it is called a *root of bitterness*, because of its noxious and poisonous qualities, its bitter effects and fruits. Learn, 3. That there is no man professing the gospel who comes short of the grace of God, but it is by reason of himself and his own sin; unbelief, negligence, and sloth, are the true causes why such persons do fail of the grace of God; *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God*.

16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance

though he sought it carefully with tears.

Our apostle proceeds in these verses to warn them against such sins as would occasion their apostasy in falling from the grace of God, and they are fornication and profaneness: *Let there be any fornicator, or profane person.* Where note, How the apostle puts fornication and profaneness together, because they usually go together; fornicators, such especially as are habitually so, do always grow profane, and profane persons do set light by fornication, and they are sins very seldom forsaken; few fornicators and profane persons do ever come to repentance. By *fornication* understand all conjunction with women out of wedlock, be it with single or married persons. By *profane persons*, understand such as mock religion, who lightly regard its promises and threatenings, who despise or neglect its worship, who speak irreverently of its concerns. Note, 2. The instance which the apostle gives of a profane person, in the person of Esau; *Let there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau.* The scripture makes no mention of his fornication, but the way whereby he manifested his profaneness is declared, namely, that *for one morsel of meat he sold his birth-right.* Which birth-right had many privileges belonging to it, as namely, a double portion of the paternal inheritance, a right of rule and government over the family, power and dominion, dignity and superiority, belonging to him, but especially the honour of priesthood, all which did belong to the first-born. Add to these the blessing which run from Abraham in the patriarchal line, and was communicated from father to son, containing an inclosure of all church privileges, and preservation of the promised seed. Now Esau, by selling his birth-right, did virtually renounce his right unto this blessing, wherein the promised seed and the church state were contained, and doing all this upon a slight consideration, for a mess of pottage, or morsel of meat, and in a regardless manner, utterly unconcerned at what he had done. This was his profaneness; and accordingly the scripture says, *Thus Esau despised his birth-right.* Learn from hence, How much it concerns all persons not to glory in their outward privileges: Esau here was the first-born of Isaac, circumcised according to the law of God, and partaker in all the worship of God, yet he proved an outcast from the covenant and promises thereof. *Profane Esau!* The 17th verse acquaints us with the fruitlessness of Esau's sorrow for parting with his birth-right, and the unprofitableness of his endeavours in

order to the recovery of it, when he would have inherited the blessing afterwards.—This *afterwards*, say some, was not less than forty years, for he sold his birth-right when he was young, and when he designed the recovery of the blessing, Isaac was old: thus long did he live in sin, without any sense of it, or repentance for it; but falling into distress, it fills him with perplexity, and he seeks the recovery of the blessing. And herein he was a type of all unbelievers, and obstinate refusers of the grace of Christ. Learn from his example, That there is a time coming when the profane sinners upon earth will be found upon their knees at God's door, seeking, and that earnestly, with strong cries and tears, for the obtaining of that blessing which they now sinfully undervalue, and scornfully despise. *Afterwards Esau would have inherited the blessing, and sought it carefully with tears.* It follows, he was rejected; that is, by his father Isaac; and found no place with him for repentance. Isaac would not change his mind, nor recall the blessing, which as a prophet of God he had conferred on Jacob. Learn hence then, That such sinners as now neglect the seeking of the blessing in God's time, have great reason to fear that they shall not find it in their own time, though they seek it with tears saller than those of Esau. Profane contemners of the grace of God ought to fear being excluded from the mercy of God; and as Isaac did not, God will not repent or alter his righteous sentence upon them. This sad event had the profaneness of Esau, and the like will they meet with who despise the grace of God.

18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, 19 And the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words: which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more; 20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded. And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. 21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

Our apostle's design being to bring over the Hebrews fully from Judaism to Christianity, he enters here upon a description of both states, showing the excellency of

the one above the other. He describes first the legal state of the church under the Old Testament, and the manner of their forefathers entering into covenant with God at mount Sinai; and then he sets forth the evangelical state, whereunto they were called, and into which they were entered. In the verses now before us he sets forth the dread and terror of the Mosaic dispensation; and the way and manner how their forefathers under the Old Testament entered into the church state; telling them, that they *came to a mount that might be touched*, that is, to mount Sinai in the desert of Arabia, a barren and fruitless place, full of bushes and brambles, but without water and food; intimating that such as are under the law, in a state of sin, bring forth no acceptable fruit unto God; and as there was no water in the desert, but that which the people lived upon was brought out of the rock, and that rock was Christ, it intimates that from Christ alone were all their and our refreshments. The law affords none, but thunders from its fiery mouth wrath and a curse. Farther, This mount is said to be *what might be touched*; that is, a sensible, carnal thing, exposed to feeling; intimating, how low and inferior the giving of the law was in comparison of the promulgation of the gospel, which was from heaven. The law was given from a mount that might be touched by man or beast, though if either touched it they must die; to intimate the bondage and fear the people were then in, who might not so much as touch the mountain where were the signs of God's presence. But the gospel was promulgated from heaven, and the Son of God sent down on purpose from thence to plant and propagate it here in the world. The second thing which the apostle tells them they were come unto, was to *fire that burned*. This fire that burned on the mount was a token of God's presence, and a distinct mean of filling the people with dread and fear. This fire represented the purity and holiness of God's nature, his jealousy and severity against sin. Thus the law represents to us the holiness and severity of God, with his anger and displeasure against sin and sinners, but there leaves us consumed, without relief by Jesus Christ. Unto fire the apostle adds *blackness, and darkness, and tempest*; which blackness and darkness might be caused by thick clouds and smoke that covered the mount. This darkness was a type of that utter darkness of hell, which the transgressors of that law deserved; and the tempest and terrible storms were emblems and signs of God's fiery indignation

and fearful vengeance on the wicked violaters of his holy law, and might also point out and signify the effects of the law then delivered, namely, to bring the soul into darkness, that it can see no light either for its direction or consolation; and it raises a tempest in the mind, of disquieting, perplexing thoughts, without relieving or encouraging a sinner to look out after any relief, till Christ in his gospel says, *Behold me, behold me*. It follows, *Ye are come to the sound of a trumpet*; this was not a real trumpet, but the sound of a trumpet formed in the air by the ministry of angels, waxing louder and louder, to signify the nearer approach of God; also as this trumpet did summon the people to appear before the Lord as a legislative trumpet, in like manner there shall be a judicial trumpet, to summon the world to appear before Christ at the great day. After the sound of the trumpet followed the *voice of words*; that is, the voice of God in a terrible manner promulgating the law out of the midst of the fire, in a language understood by that people. As the sound of the trumpet, so the voice of God was loud, majestic, terrible, and like thunder. *Quest.* But why was there such vast solemnity used at the giving of the law? *Ans.* To signify the majesty and authority of him who was the supreme Lawgiver, even the Lord of heaven and earth; and that the greater the outward solemnity was, the greater the inward impression might be upon the minds of the people; and to signify, that if the promulgation of the law was so awful, the transgression of it would be fatal, and the transgressors' punishment very dreadful. Observe lastly, The event of this sight and hearing on the part of the people: Fear made them desire that they might hear this voice no more. And God's design in all was to cause them to long for, and look after, that great prophet Christ Jesus, by whom God would speak unto them more comfortably, and by whom they might have access to the throne of grace more freely. *They entreated that the word should not be spoken unto them any more*, because it heightened their fear and dread to the utmost. Learn from hence, That the sight and voice of God will be very dreadful to us; and there will be no appearance for us before him with confidence and peace, unless we have an answer in readiness with us to all the words of the law, even all that the law requires of us; and such as trust to their own works and merits to answer for them, or to any thing whatsoever, besides the blood and sacrifice, the mediation and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, the surety of the new covenant, will

find themselves eternally deceived. The next evidence the apostle gives of the dreadful promulgation of the law, and consequently of the miserable state of them that are under its power, appears in this, that the people *could not endure that which was commanded*; that is, the severity of that command, that if a beast touched the mountain it *should be stoned, or thrust through with a dart*. All this was to show the absolute inaccessibleness of God, in and by the law, and at what distance we ought to keep ourselves, from every thing that falls under the curse of the law. It is added last of all, *that Moses himself did exceedingly fear and quake*. From whence observe, How all persons concerned were brought to an utter loss and distress at the promulgation and giving of the law, from whence no relief is to be obtained, but by him alone, who is the end of the law for righteousness unto all them that believe.

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23 To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of Abel*.

Our apostle having given an account, in the foregoing verses, of the state of the Jewish church under the law, comes now to declare that most excellent state whereto believers are called in and by the gospel. The privileges here summed up partly respect the church militant, and partly the church triumphant. Observe then, The glorious privilege of the gospel-state, and what believers are said to come to, whilst militant here on earth. 1. They are said to come unto *mount Sion, the city of the living God, the new Jerusalem*; not to mount Sinai, which was full of terror and discomfort, but to mount Sion, full of all spiritual blessings. Where note, The gospel church is called the city of the living God. A city is a place of safety and a place of honour, a place of peace and rest. The souls of sinners can find no place of rest or safety under the law, but we have all these things by the gospel; rest in Christ, peace with God, safety in divine protection, &c. And as a king dwells in his city, so God dwells in the church of believers; "This is my rest for ever, here

will I dwell says God, for I have a delight therein." O what manner of persons ought they to be, who are the denizens of the city of God! Alas! the great number who pretend highly to the church, and its privileges, are citizens of this world only, and altogether unfit for this holy society. 2. Believers are next said to come to an *innumerable company of angels*. To come to these, is to be of their society; they and we are one in Christ; the angels above, and believers below, make up but one corporation or family; they are our fellow-citizens, and our fellow-subjects. True, they are above us, and at a mighty distance from us, yet upon occasion very near us; and though we do not see them, nor speak unto them, nor familiarly converse with them, yet they love us, have a special care of us, and are ministering to us, as heirs of the same salvation with themselves. 3. They are come to the *general assembly or church of the first-born*; that is, they are of the number of God's regenerated and adopted ones, those that are born again, whose names are registered in heaven. As the first-born under the law had a right to the inheritance, to a double part of the inheritance; so they who are interested really in the gospel-church, have a right to all that God has provided, and Christ hath purchased, even to the whole inheritance of grace and glory. O glorious privilege, to be brought unto this blessed society, this general assembly of the first-born; especially if we consider what company, what society, what assembly we belong unto, without it, which is no other than that of devils, and the seed of the wicked serpent. 4. They are come to *God the judge of all*; that is, they have access to God by Jesus Christ, access to his favour by justification, and access into his presence by prayer and supplication, yea, access to him as a judge, without terror or consternation. Blessed privilege! believers have a comfortable access to God as the judge of all; with all their causes and complaints, he will hear them, plead their cause, and judge for them, and make their oppressions unsafe to the greatest of the sons of men. 5. Believers are said to come to the *spirits of just men made perfect*. Come to them, though not in the same place with them till death; yet we and they have the same God and Sovereign, the same Head and Saviour, the same expectation of a glorious resurrection. Note here, 1. There are spirits of men in a separate state and condition, capable of communion with God and the church. 2. That all the spirits of just men departed, are made perfect; their race is consummated, perfect deliver-

ance from all sin and sorrow is completed, and a full reward enjoyed; their faith is heightened into sight, and all their graces elevated into glory. 3. That yet are they spirits still, and no more but spirits; and though perfected spirits, yet there is wanting the last finishing stroke from the hand of God to render the bodies as well as the spirits of just men for ever perfect in the morning of the resurrection. 4. Believers are here said to come to *Jesus the mediator of the new covenant*; as if the apostle had said, "Your fathers came to a mount of fire and smoke, of darkness, terror, and death, where there was no mediator to make their peace with God, no blood to cry for mercy, and to cleanse them from sin. But you, by forsaking judaism, and coming over to Christianity fully, are come into that society where Christ is mediator and priest; where the blood of Christ sprinkled upon your souls cries aloud for mercy, and cleanses from all sin. *And to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.* Intimating, that Christ's blood solicits God with stronger cries for mercy, than did ever Abel's for revenge. *Quest.* But what are those *better things* which the blood of Christ speaks above and beyond the blood of Abel? *Ans.* 1. It speaks better things from God unto us, namely, that his justice is satisfied, his wrath appeased, the condemning guilt of sin expiated, and the majesty of God fully reconciled to all believers. 2. It speaks better things to God for us, namely, to be at peace with us, to rest in his love towards us, to furnish us with all grace here, and to fit us for glory hereafter. O blessed Jesus! thy blood never cried as Abel's did, for vengeance on them by whom it was shed, but pleaded for pardon, and obtained pardon on the behalf of many. Happy they! who by faith are made partakers of this typical blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than the blood of Abel.

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape* if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven:

Our apostle having, in the foregoing verses, given a summary account of the two states of the law and the gospel, with the incomparable excellence of the latter above the former, he gives them an exhortation and cautionary direction to take heed that they did not turn a deaf ear to so excellent a person as Christ was, preaching

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to them by his doctrine: *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.* Here note in general, That to refuse any who speak unto us in the name and authority of Christ, is to refuse Christ himself. This may be applied to all the faithful preachers of the gospel, however they may be despised in and by the world. But it is here the person of Christ that is particularly intended. To refuse him here, is either to reject his doctrine, and not receive it, or having received it, to renounce it; so that this refusal includes both unbelief and apostasy, either of which are fatal and dangerous to the sons of men. Observe next, The reason drawn from the heinousness of the sin, and the grievousness of the punishment: *If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth*; that is, Moses, who delivered this message here below; *much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven*; that is, Jesus Christ his Son, sent down from heaven, personally to deliver his holy doctrine; and now speaking to us from heaven by his Holy Spirit, in his ministers and apostles. Note here, 1. That Christ did in former times speak unto his church by Moses and the prophets. 2. That in these latter times he vouchsafed to speak unto his church personally himself. 3. That after he personally disappeared and left the world, he vouchsafed still to speak unto his church by his Spirit on the ministry of the word. 4. That though to refuse Christ, when speaking here on earth, was a grievous sin, and deserved a fearful punishment; yet to refuse him now, speaking from heaven, is a more grievous sin, and deserves a greater punishment, considering who speaks, what he speaks, and from whence he speaks: the gospel was a mystery brought to us from the bosom of the Father, the clearest revelation of God's will, and the fullest manifestation of his love, and yet few regard it, most reject it, to their unutterable and inevitable condemnation.

26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. 27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

As if the apostle had said, "The voice of God, at the promulging of the law on mount Sinai, shook the earth; but he pro-

misèd after this to shake all nations, and that Christ, the expected Messias, the desire of all nations, should come, which is now fulfilled." *Quest.* But what means our apostle, by God's shaking not the earth only, but also heaven? *Ans.* He means thereby all the Mosaical worship, all the Judaical state; these were shaken at the coming of Christ, in order to the introduction of the immovable gospel state, which was perpetually to remain. Learn hence, That the coming of the Messias was to be the last dispensation of God for the salvation of mankind, and consequently was to be perpetual and unchangeable. The apostle argues from the words, *once more*, that the former dispensation should be removed; to make way for that which should perpetually remain. Several things are here asserted by our apostle, 1. That there were some things which were intended by God to be shaken, namely, the Levitical priesthood, and all the Jewish sacrifices and services; these things were to be shaken, moved, yea, altogether removed out of the way. 2. That there were things that could not be shaken, or removed, but remain; these were the gospel state, the Christian religion, which shall continue until time shall be no more. 3. That the former things were removed, that the latter might be introduced and established; the law and the gospel were inconsistent, the legal and evangelical administration could not stand in force together, therefore there was a necessity for the nulling of the one, in order to the establishing the other. 4. That the removal of the law, to bring in the more perfect administration of the gospel, doth prove the stability and immutability of the gospel, that it stands fast for ever: there shall be no more shaking, no farther alteration in matters of religion, to the end of the world. For thus it follows,

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear: 29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Observe here, 1. That the apostle calls the dispensation of the gospel, *a kingdom that cannot be shaken*, in opposition to the law, which was an imperfect and alterable dispensation; the gospel revelation is full and final, there is no need of any farther revelation after this, nor of any change of that religion which was brought from heaven by the Son of God, in regard of the perfection of it, and its admirable fitness

to reform the world, and to recover mankind out of their lost estate and lapsed condition, and to bring them to eternal happiness; and this by the purity of its doctrine and the power of its arguments, to work upon the minds of men by the clear discovery of the mighty rewards and punishments of another world: we have received now *a kingdom that cannot be shaken*. Observe, 2. The inference which the apostle draws from the perfection and perpetuity of this revelation which God has last of all made to the world by his Son, *Let us have grace to serve God acceptably*; that is, let us live as becometh those to whom God hath made so clear and perfect a revelation of his mind and will; we have all the advantages of divine revelation which the world ever had, and the last and most perfect that the world ever shall have; we have not only Moses, but Jesus; not only the moral law, but the glorious gospel, which the Son of God came down on purpose from heaven to declare to the world. Observe, 3. The manner how God must be served, *With reverence and godly fear*. Reverence in divine service looks at God's glorious excellency and majesty, and at our own unworthiness, together with that infinite distance between him and us; and *godly fear* is a religious awe upon the soul in holy duties, from the consideration of the great danger of sinful miscarriages in his worship. Observe, 4. The reason making the foregoing duty necessary, *for our God is a consuming fire*. Our God, intimates a covenant relation. Note hence, That the believer's God is a *consuming fire*, but not to believers; or if so, not to consume their graces, but their corruptions only, or at most their corruptible comforts. Note, 2. That though God takes us near to himself, and into covenant with himself, yet he expects that we consider who he is, and what he is, even a *consuming fire*, and a *jealous God*.

CHAP. XIII.

Our apostle being now come to the conclusion of this most excellent epistle, closes it with an exhortation to several evangelical and moral duties, thereby pointing out to the ministers of the gospel, the right order and best method of preaching, namely, first to unfold the mysteries of the gospel, with the grace of God therein, and then to improve it to practical holiness in the duties of obedience. In the pressing of these duties here, because there was not room for all, he mentions only some, which were most necessary for the Hebrews to attend unto with diligence, in their present circumstances: and herein also ought our apostle to be our pattern in the work of the ministry. Circumstances may make it necessary oftentimes that some duties be more diligently pressed on our people than others, which of themselves are of no less importance than they. And finally, the divine wisdom and pious care of the apostle is to be observed and followed by us, in that solemn and fervent prayer which he put up to God for a blessing upon his exhorta-

tions. Thus did our Lord before him, having preached a most excellent sermon to his disciples, St. John, chap. xiv. xv. xvi. He concludes it with a suitable prayer, chap. xvii. Doubtless herein, according to our ability, we ought to follow our blessed Lord's and his holy apostle's instructive examples.

LET brotherly love continue.

Love being the fountain and foundation of all moral duties, our apostle begins with it, and places it at the head of all the rest, as comprehending our whole duty towards our neighbour. Note here, The duty commanded is *love*: the special duty recommended is *brotherly love*, or that brotherly affection which every true Christian chiefly bears to all his fellow-members in Christ for grace's sake; and the manner of the injunction or command is, that this brotherly affection do *continue* and constantly abide, not in the presence and appearance of it only, but in the truth and reality of it, for there are innumerable occasions which will be ready to impair and weaken it, if it be not well grounded; alas! unsuitableness of natural tempers, differences in judgment, and matters of opinion, inconsistent worldly interest, readiness to provocation, or to be provoked, pride on the one hand, or envy on the other, will sadly occasion the temporary decay, yea, at last the total loss, of this noble grace, if it be not well grounded and deeply rooted. Learn hence, That brotherly love is very apt to impair and decay, if we endeavour not continually its preservation and revival. Lord, how marvellous is it, that so many amongst us can persuade themselves that they are Christians, and yet be not only strangers, but enemies to this grace and duty of love! How is the power and glory of Christianity weakened through want of it! And verily, until this holy love be again revived amongst us, the interest of Christianity will run very low, yea, the concerns of religion will more and more run to ruin.

2. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

The second duty here resorted to is hospitality, especially towards strangers, which consisted in receiving them into their houses, and furnishing them with all needful accommodations. In those eastern countries inns were not so ready as with us, and Christians were generally poor, not able to bear their own charges in their travelling from place to place. Strangers, even amongst heathens, were accounted sacred, and under the peculiar protection of God; and a punishment was appointed

for those who were inhospitable towards them. Hospitality is a prescribed duty, but this part of it, to wit, the entertaining of strangers, which was so great a virtue in ancient times, is now driven out of the world by the wickedness of some and the covetousness of others; few strangers are worthy to receive entertainment, and as few have hearts to give it. Observe farther, The manner of prescribing this duty, *be not forgetful to entertain strangers*: no doubt a positive command is included in the prohibition, *forget not*; that is, remember to do it, be always in readiness for the discharge of this duty: our hearts ought to be always in a gracious disposition towards such duties as are attended with difficulty or charge; the liberal mind deviseth liberal things. Observe, lastly, The reason enforcing the duty,—*hereby some have entertained angels unawares*; so did Abraham and Lot entertain three angels, in the appearance of men, not knowing who or what they were. By receiving strangers, out of faith in Christ and love to God, we may receive precious saints, and (which is more) some blessed angel sent to keep them, and (which is most of all) Jesus Christ himself, who at present represents, and will hereafter acknowledge and reward such kindnesses shown to his members as done to himself, *Matt. xxv.*

3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

Hospitality towards strangers was expressed in the foregoing verse: here, compassion towards sufferers, such as are captives, prisoners in bonds, either upon a religious or civil account. Here note, 1. That bodily bondage is a bitter bondage; captivity is a most grievous calamity. 2. That we are very prone to forget others' captivity, when we ourselves are in prosperity. 3. That such as are in bonds for Christ's sake especially, and his holy gospel, ought particularly to be remembered by us, they are and ought to be the peculiar objects of our compassion; although, considering the cause in which they suffer, it is better and more honourable to be in bonds for Christ, than to be at liberty with a raging, persecuting world; for bonds and imprisonments for the truth were consecrated to God, and made honourable by the bonds and imprisonment of Christ himself, and commended to the church in all ages, by the bonds and imprisonments of the apostles, and the primitive witnesses to Christianity. Note farther, How we are to be mindful of them, and in what man

ner; by visiting them, administering to them, sympathizing with them, praying for them, and all this *as bound with them*, which implies an act of union, as members of the same mystical body, and suffering in and for the same common cause: *Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them*; it follows, *and those that suffer adversity, as being in the body*. This implies that there are many kinds of afflictions besides bonds; that we are prone to forget those who suffer lighter and lesser afflictions: if they be not in bonds, we are ready to forget them, though they suffer much adversity: but the command is more general, to remember all that are in any kind of adversity, whether they suffer in body, name, or estate, by sickness, pain, losses, reproaches, or any kind of calamity; the professors of religion are exempted from no sorts of adversity, and under every kind of it we must remember them, and sympathize with them, because we ourselves are *in the body with them*; that is, say some, we are members of the same mystical body with them, and therefore when one member suffers, all the members are to suffer with it. *Yourselves are in the body*; that is, say others, in the same state of natural life, subject and obnoxious to the same sufferings, and within the reach of the same adversities. Learn hence, That a sense of our own being continually obnoxious unto sufferings during this life, ought to incline our minds to a diligent consideration of others in their sufferings, so as to discharge all duties of love and helpfulness towards them; as an evidence of our interest in the same mystical body with them, and as a ground of just expectation of the like relief and compassion from them: *Remember them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body*.

4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled:—

Our apostle having in the former verses directed Christians to their duty one towards another, in this and the following verses he directs them to perform their duty towards themselves; and because the two radical comprehensive lusts of corrupted nature are uncleanness and covetousness, he therefore commends unto their care and practice those two great duties of chastity and contentation, the former in this, the latter in the next verse. Now here observe, That to prevent the former sin, the ravings of unbridled lust, our apostle prescribes the remedy which God appoints, *marriage*, that is, the conjunction of two individual persons that have freedom in choice or consent, and have power

over themselves, not being within the degrees of affinity or consanguinity prohibited, betwixt whom there results such an indissoluble union, that thereby they become one flesh; such marriage he affirms to be honourable, and to be so esteemed in regard of its author, God himself, *Gen. ii. 12. in regard of the place, paradise*; in regard of the time, in man's innocency; in regard of the end and usefulness of it, the continuation of the race of mankind; thus it is honourable, and ought to be had in honour. The apostle adds, that it is thus *honourable in all*: that is, amongst all orders, ranks, and degrees of men, that are called thereunto; the remedy is equally provided by God for all; and therefore for the church of Rome to deny it to their clergy, is to usurp authority over the consciences of men, and to judge themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker, which our first parents in innocency did not think themselves too pure for. Learn hence, 1. That divine institution is sufficient to render any state or condition of life honourable, and consequently the state of marriage. 2. That which is honourable by divine institution, may be rendered abominable by the miscarriages of men. 3. That it is an horrid contempt of the authority of God, and a bold usurpation over the consciences of men, to forbid the state of marriage unto any, which God has made honourable among all. Next to the state of marriage, the apostle adds the duty of that state; *the bed undefiled*, in opposition to the defiled bed of whoremongers and adulterers, and the preservation of marriage duties within their due bounds.

—But whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Having exhorted to conjugal purity and chastity in the former part of the verse, he adds a very cogent reason and forcible motive to it in the latter words, because *whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*; that is, all persons who in a single state of life do know one another carnally, without a marriage vow or covenant between them; if both parties be single, their filthiness is called fornication; if either of them be married, adultery: neither of them shall escape the judgment of God; that is, temporal punishment in this life, and eternal damnation in the next. Learn hence, That whatever light thoughts men have of the sin of uncleanness, yet we are assured it doth in its own nature deserve eternal condemnation, and such as live and die impenitently in it, shall certainly perish for it; and if so, then all occasions of, and all

temptations leading to, those sins, are to be avoided, as we love our souls: for of all sinners, those who have habitually given up themselves to the lusts of the flesh, are most rarely and difficultly brought to repentance.

5 *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have.* For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Observe here, A dehortation, or negative precept, *Let your conversation be without covetousness.* By *conversation* we are first to understand the disposition of the mind, then the actions of the life; both ought to be freed from all inordinate love to, and endeavours after, more of this world than God is pleased to give unto us. By *covetousness*, we are not to understand, as if a provident and prudential care for the things of this life were forbidden, or as if all endeavours to maintain our right to what God has given us were unlawful; but by *covetousness*, is meant an eager and an insatiable desire after, accompanied with restless and unwearied endeavours for, the things of this life, proceeding from an undue valuation of them, and an inordinate love unto them. Learn hence, That as all sin in general, so covetousness in particular, is inconsistent with a Christian conversation, according to the gospel. No sin at this day doth more stain the glory of Christianity than this doth. Alas! the profligate lives of debauched persons, their blasphemies, adulteries, drunkenness, and such like, do not half the mischief to religion which this sin doth, because the persons guilty of it pretend to religion, which the other concern not themselves with. Observe, 2. A positive injunction, *Be content with those things that ye have.* Contentment is a gracious disposition of mind, whereby the Christian rests satisfied with that portion of the good things of this life which the wisdom of God assigns him, without complaining of the *little* which God gives to him, or envying the *much* which God bestows on others. Yet know, that contentment with what we have, is not inconsistent with, nor exclusive of, an industrious diligence, and an honest moderate care to increase what we have, for ourselves and families; honest industry is the command of God, and he has given us six days in seven for the exercise of it:

but it is utterly exclusive of all covetous desires, of all anxious cares, of all priding ourselves in, and boasting of, what we have received, contemning and despising others, a vanity which men of weak minds only are guilty of. Observe, 3. The argument to enforce the duty: *For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* The words are a promise, a promise of God, a promise of his presence and providence to assure us of both, and that he never will leave us. He uses five negatives, *I will not leave thee, I will not, I will not, I will not forsake thee.* Where note, That the vehemency of the expression, by the multiplication of the negative particles, is both an effect of divine condescension, and gives the utmost security to the faith of believers, that God will be present with them and comfortably provide for them; so that the words are a strong reason to dehort from covetousness, and to exhort to contentedness; for having God present with us, to take care of, and provide for us, we have all things in him, and a promise from him, that we shall not want any thing that is good and needful for us; only we must allow God this liberty, and give him leave to judge what is needful, and when it is needful. Observe, 4. That though the foregoing promise is made to Joshua, yet the apostle applies it to all believers, and draws comfort from it: *We may boldly say, the Lord is my helper.* Here note, That whatsoever promise is made in particular to any one believer, if there be not some special reason which confines and ties it to his person, every believer may apply it to himself. This promise which God made particularly to Joshua for his support, under that great difficulty in conquering the land of Canaan, the apostle here applies to the case and state of particular believers: *We may therefore boldly say, &c.,* believers have the same grounds that he had, may use the same confidence that he did, though our circumstances and his are not the same. All the promises of God's gracious presence made to the prophets and apostles of old, all believers may apply to themselves in their suffering state: *We may boldly say, &c.*

7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation:

The next duty recommended to them, is respect to the spiritual guides and ecclesiastical governors, whom God by death or persecution at any time removes from

them, and that is, to preserve their memory fresh amongst them as a precious treasure: *Remember them that have the rule over you.* Secondly, To propound their holy conversation to their daily view, in a Christian imitation of those evangelical graces and moral virtues which were so orient and exemplary in their rulers' lives. Learn hence, 1. That it ought to be the care of the church's guides to set before their people, and leave behind them, such an example of faith and holiness, as that it may be the duty of the church to remember them, and follow their example. Learn, 2. That it is the standing duty of that people whom God hath honoured with the enjoyment of a spiritual guide and ruler, perseveringly to follow their faith in the soundness of it, and in the steadfastness of faith; and to imitate their conversation, by exemplifying those evangelical graces and Christian virtues, which did so orientally shine forth in the lives of their ministers.

8 Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

These words may be understood three ways; with respect to the person of Christ, to the office of Christ, and to the doctrine of Christ. 1. With respect to the person of Christ, he is eternal and immutable in every state of the church, and in every condition of believers he is the same, and always will be the same in his divine person; he is, ever was, and ever will be, all in all unto his church. 2. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever: not only in respect of his person, but in regard of his office. The virtue of the legal sacrifice expired with the offering, but the precious oblation of Christ hath an everlasting efficacy to obtain full pardon for believers; his blood is as powerful to propitiate God, as if it were this day shed upon the cross. 3. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; in regard of his doctrine, that remains unchangeable and irrevocable. The gospel is the last revelation of the mind of God, made known by Jesus Christ, that ever will be laid before the world: such therefore as reject him and his doctrine, reject the last remedy, the only remedy, and must needs perish, without any possibility of recovery. Learn from the whole, that our Lord Jesus Christ was from the beginning of the world the immutable object of his church's faith; and the consideration of Jesus Christ in his eternity, immutability, and all-sufficiency of his power, as he is always the same, is the great encouragement of believers in the profession of their faith, and a mighty support under all the difficulties they meet with upon the

account thereof: *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*

9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines:—

There is an inference in these words from what was asserted in the former, concerning the immutability of Christ and his doctrine; namely, thus; Seeing that the doctrine of Christ taught by the apostles is as Christ himself, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, there the apostle dehorts them from being carried about with divers and strange doctrines; that is, in short, the doctrines of those that mingled judaism and christianity together by cleaving to the legal observation. Note here, The nature of the false doctrines, and what efficacy they have upon the minds of men; in themselves they are light and vain like the wind, tossing men up and down as the wind and the waves do the ship that wants ballast, turning them out of their course, and endangering their destruction; therefore says the apostle, Take heed that ye be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.

—For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

By meats here, understand disputes and controversies about the differences of meats; by grace, understand the doctrine of the gospel, and the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, which fixes and establishes the heart, and keeps the christian steady and steadfast. Learn hence, That it is far better to have the heart filled with divine grace, than the head with disputes and controversies in religion; *It is good that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats.* The reason is added, *They have not profited them that are occupied therein*; that is, to observe the doctrine concerning a religious distinction of meats, since the gospel has been entertained, is altogether unprofitable and unavailable: yea, meats of themselves profited not those who observed them, even whilst the institutions concerning them were in force. Learn hence, That those who decline from the grace of God, as the only mean to establish their hearts in peace with him, do labour idly that whereby they shall receive no advantage.

10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

These words are brought in as a farther reason why the Christian Hebrews should not return to Judaism, or any other doc-

trine different from the gospel of Christ: *We* Christians, says the apostle, *have an altar*: that is, a sacrifice, a priest offered upon, and sanctified by, the altar of the cross. Note here, that the church of Christ under the New Testament has its altar, as well as the Old Testament dispensation had theirs. The altar which we have, is Christ alone and his sacrifice; for he was both priest, altar, and sacrifice, all himself, and still continueth so to be. Note, 2. That this altar, is every way sufficient in itself for the ends of an altar; and therefore the introduction of any other sacrifice requiring a material altar, is derogatory to the sacrifice of Christ, and exclusive of him from being an altar. Observe next, The persons excluded from having any right unto, or expectation of benefit by, this altar, namely, such as *serve the tabernacle*; that is, such as cleave still to the worship appointed for the Jewish tabernacle, and adhere to the Mosaical observations. They have, no right to this altar by any divine institution, no right by virtue of their office and relation to the tabernacle. Learn hence, That all privileges, of what nature soever, without a participation of Christ, as the altar and sacrifice of his church, are of no advantage to them that enjoy them; *We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle.*

11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high-priest for sin, are burned without the camp. 12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. 13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach:

As if the apostle had said, "As the beasts slain for atonement, whose blood was brought into the sanctuary, were not to be eaten by the priest, but burnt without the bounds of the camp of Israel; in like manner Christ, when he was to be offered up, to sanctify the people with his own blood, went without the gates of Jerusalem to suffer; signifying, that as they rejected him as unworthy to live with them, so he departed from them and their political and legal state. Accordingly, *Let us go forth unto him without the camp*; that is, let us go unto him from the Jewish state and ceremonial law, bearing his reproach of the cross, which must be expected by us." Observe here, That Jesus Christ in his suffering did offer himself unto God; that the end of his offering was to sanctify the people: this

he designed, and this he accomplished by his *own* blood, so called emphatically, partly in opposition to the sacrifice of the high-priest, which was the blood of bulls, and not their *own*; and partly to testify what our sanctification cost Christ, even his *own* blood. Observe farther, The circumstance of place where our Lord suffered, it was *without the gate*, of the city of Jerusalem; intimating, that he had now finally left the city and church of the Jews, and accordingly he denounced their destruction as he went out of the gate, *Luke* xxiii. 28, 29, 30. And by thus turning his back upon the temple, he plainly showed, that he had now put an end to all sacrificing in the temple, as unto divine acceptance; and by going out of the gate, he declared that his sacrifice, and the benefits of it, were not included in the church of the Jews, but equally extended unto the whole world; and by going out of the city as a malefactor, and dying an accursed death, he plainly declared that he died a sin-offering: that his death was a punishment for sin. Observe, lastly, Our duty to go forth to him without the camp; this implies a relinquishing of all the privileges of the temple and city. 1. A turning our backs eternally upon all Jewish observations. 2. An acceptance of the merit of his sacrifice. 3. The owning of Christ under all that reproach and contempt that was cast upon him in his suffering without the gate, and not being ashamed of his cross. 4. In our conformity to him in self-denial and suffering; all which are comprised in his apostolical exhortation, *Let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach*. The sum is this, "That we must leave all to go forth to a crucified Saviour; and if we resolve so to do, we must expect and prepare to meet with all sorts of reproaches."

14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

These words may be considered either relatively or absolutely: consider them with relation to the context, and their sense is this: "How cheerfully ought believers, according to the advice in the foregoing verse, to go forth to Christ without the camp, bearing his reproach, when they consider their present state and condition, that they have no city here below, that was now the seat of divine worship whereunto it was confined, as the Jews had at Jerusalem before the abolishment of their ceremonial worship; but they seek one to come, even the heavenly Jerusalem, where they shall worship God in his temple day and night?" Consider the words absolutely in themselves, and two things seem to be intended and

designed by them: 1. That our condition in this world is very uncertain and unsettled, *We have no continuing city here.* 2. It implies a tendency to a future settling, and the hopes and expectations we have of a happier condition, into which we shall enter when we go out of this world. Learn hence, 1. That the world never did, nor ever will, give a state of satisfactory rest unto believers; it will not afford them a city of rest, hardly a place of refuge; they must therefore arise and depart, for this is not their rest. Learn, 2. That as God has prepared a city of rest for believers, so it is their duty to seek and secure it, and continually endeavour the attainment of it, in the way of his own appointment: *We have not, but we seek.*

15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to his name. 16 But to do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Our apostle having, at the tenth verse, declared, that we Christians have an altar, to wit, Jesus Christ; here we are directed to offer a sacrifice, without which an altar is of no use: *By him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.* Where note, 1. Christians are to offer a sacrifice to God, and to none but God; no creature, angel, or saint, has any part in it. Praise them we may; but offer a sacrifice of prayer or praise to them we may not. Note, 2. That the Christian sacrifice, which he presents to God, and none but him, is not propitiatory, but gratulatory; a sacrifice of praise. We pretend to no expiation of sin, we owe that to a better sacrifice. What we offer is the fruit of our lips, not the fruit of our fields, or of our flocks, but of such lips as confess to his name. Note, 3. The time when, and the persons by whom, this sacrifice of praise is to be offered to God, and that is *continually*, constantly, morning and evening; not putting Almighty God off with less under the gospel, than the Jews offered to him under the law, which was the morning and evening sacrifice, and all this by Christ; *By him let us offer*, by him who is our peace may we find access. It is his merit and mediation that crowns our sacrifices, and obtains acceptance for it. Note, 4. Another sacrifice especially recommended to our race, as exceeding acceptable and well-pleasing unto God, and that is the sacrifice of alms-giving, beneficence, and bounty, doing all the good we can, and communicating to the relief of

such as want: *But to do good, &c.* As if the apostle had said, "Take heed you do not put God off with the fruit of your lips, the prayers and praises which cost you little; but now he calls for the labour of your hands, and for a part to be given to him in his poor members, of what he has given to you, therefore, be sure you forget not to do good and communicate, *for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*, with none better pleased than this, pleased with none without this." Intimating, that it is dangerous to the souls of men, when attendance unto one duty is abused, to countenance the neglect of others: when men give God daily sacrifice of prayer and praise, but withhold from him in his members the sacrifice of alms-giving, they give him the fruit of their lips, which cost them nothing: but *to do good and communicate*, which will cost them something, this they forget. 2. That such works and duties as are peculiarly useful to men, are peculiarly acceptable unto God: *With such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account: that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.

Two things are here observable: 1. The minister's duty towards his people. 2. The people's duty towards their ministers. In the former, note, 1. The duty required, *To rule, to watch.* God makes the bishops and pastors of his church here guiding rulers in the church affairs; they rule not with rigour, but with lenity and benignity; they watch over them, that they may guide and lead them with rational guidance and conduct. Note, 2. The subject of this ruling power and authority; it is not over their estates, but their persons, particularly and principally their souls. *They watch for your souls*; as Jacob watched over Laban's, so do the ministers watch over Christ's flock by day and night. Note, 3. The great engagement and obligation that lies upon them thus to rule, and thus to watch: *They must give an account*, that is, of their work and office, of their duty and discharge: there is a great shepherd, a chief shepherd, as Christ is called the prince of shepherds, to whom all inferior shepherds must give an account of their office, of their work, and of the flock committed to their charge. Note, 4. The different accounts that will be given by the ministers of God at the great day, some with joy, others with grief. It is matter of the great-

est joy to us when we find any souls thriving under our ministry, and blessing God for the benefit they find by it; but, on the other hand, the sadness of our hearts under the barrenness and unprofitableness of many under our ministerial labours, is not easily to be expressed. O God! with what sighing, with what groaning, with what inward heaviness and mourning, our accounts unto Christ are now given and accompanied, thou only knowest, and wilt make manifest at the great day! Observe,

2. The people's duty declared with reference to their spiritual guides and rulers, and that is, to *obey them, and submit themselves. Obey them that rule over you, and submit yourselves*; obey their doctrine, and submit to their discipline, but neither with a blind and implicit obedience. Obey their doctrine, *teaching you all things, whatsoever Christ has commanded them*; and submit to their rule whilst it is exercised in the name of Christ, and according to his institution. Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ, as supreme head of his church, has ordered and ordained that there shall be officers of his church, to guide and teach, to rule and watch over it, to the end of the world. Learn, 2. That due obedience of the church in all its members unto the rulers of it, in the discharge of their office and duty, is the best means of its edification, and an happy cause of order and peace in the whole body. *Obey them, &c.*

18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. 19 But I beseech *you* the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

In these words observe, 1. A request made by the apostle to these Hebrews for prayer, *Pray for us*. The prayers of the meanest saints may be useful to the greatest apostles, both with respect to their persons, and the discharge of their office. Observe, 2. The ground which gave him confidence to ask their prayers, and assurance that he should receive them; *We trust we have a good conscience in all things*. Behold here with what modesty and humility the apostle speaks of himself, even in things of which he had the highest and fullest assurance: *We trust we have a good conscience in all things*. *Quest*. What is a good conscience? *Ans*. A good conscience is a conscience enlightened by the word of God, a conscience awakened by the Spirit of God, a conscience purified and pacified by the blood of Christ, a conscience universally tender of all God's

commands. Observe, 3. The testimony given of his having a good conscience, *Willing in all things to live honestly*; a resolution and will, accompanied with constant endeavours to live honestly, is a fruit and evidence of a good conscience: the word *willing* denotes readiness, resolution, and endeavour. Observe, 4. How he presses for an interest in their prayers, with respect to his present circumstances, and his design of coming to them; *I beseech you the rather, &c.*

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Our apostle having in the former verse desired their prayers for him, in this verse he adds thereunto his own prayer for them, a most glorious and excellent prayer, inclosing the whole mystery of divine grace in its original, and the way of its communication by Jesus Christ, a prayer evidently proceeding from a spirit full of faith and love. Observe here, 1. The title assigned and given to God, *The God of peace*. But why the God of peace, rather than the God of power, or the God of grace, or the God of glory? Because the divine power was not put forth in raising Christ from the dead till God was pacified. Justice incensed exposed him to death; but justice appeased freed him from the dead. Observe, 2. The titles assigned and given to Christ, and they seem to express his threefold office: of a Prophet, in that he styles him *the great Shepherd of the sheep*; of a Priest, that he is said to be *brought again from the dead, by the blood of the everlasting covenant*; and of a King, in that he is styled *our Lord Jesus Christ*. Note, Christ is a shepherd, that great shepherd of the sheep; a shepherd, because as a shepherd he rules and governs his people, as a shepherd he leads them by his heavenly doctrine and instructive example, as a shepherd, he feeds them with his word, yea, with his precious body and blood; he is styled not *the*, but *that* Shepherd, namely, that was promised of old, the object and the hope of the church from the beginning; and *that great Shepherd*, because great in his person, great in his power, great in his undertaking, great in his glory and exaltation, above the whole creation; and the

great Shepherd of the sheep, because they are his own, a little flock in the midst of wolves, which could never be preserved, were it not by the power and care of this great Shepherd. Observe, 3. The work assigned to God as a God of peace, he brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ.— Christ is said to raise himself in regard of immediate efficiency, but God the Father is said to raise him in regard of sovereign authority. God the Father, to whose justice the debt was due, by letting Christ out of the prison of the grave, acknowledged himself satisfied; the God of peace, to evidence that peace was now perfectly made, brought Christ again from the dead. But how did he do this? It is answered, *By the blood of the everlasting covenant*, that is, by the blood of Christ himself, which ratified and confirmed the covenant. Observe, 4. The things prayed for: 1. Perfection in every good work, to do the will of God! it is not an absolute perfection that is here intended, but a readiness to every good work, or duty of obedience. 2. *To work in them that which is well pleasing in his sight*; by this understand the actual, gracious performance of every known duty. Note, That the efficacy and actual efficiency of divine grace, in and unto every act of obedience and duty, is here prayed for, and relied upon. Observe, lastly, A doxology, or ascription of all glory to Christ, *To whom be glory, &c.* All grace is from him, and

therefore all glory to be ascribed to him. The whole dispensation of grace will issue in the eternal glory of Jesus Christ.

22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation; for I have written a letter unto you in few words. 23 Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. 24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. 25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

Our apostle had shut up and closed his epistle before: he adds these verses by way of postscript. Now he begs of them kindly to accept, and wisely to improve, the exhortations given them in this epistle, wherein he has handled many weighty matters in few words. He lets them know that Timothy was set at liberty, and probably gone forth to preach the gospel, with whom if he returned shortly, he hoped to come unto them, being desirous to see them. And thus with salutations to them all in general and church governors in particular, both from himself and the Christians in Italy, he wishes them an increase of all grace, and an abundant sense of the love and favour of God in Christ, saying, *Grace be with you all, Amen.*

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF S T. J A M E S.

The Epistle of St. James, together with the six following Epistles, have gone under the name of Catholic Epistles for many ages, because, say some, they were not written to a particular city or country as most of St. Paul's Epistles were, but to all the Christian Jews abroad, dispersed into several countries throughout the world, whose suffering condition rendered the consolation which this Epistle affords very needful and necessary, as being greatly supporting.

The author and penman of it was St. James, commonly called James the Lees, and our Lord's brother, the son of Alphaeus, styled also James the Just, and bishop of Jerusalem; consequently its authority cannot reasonably be questioned.

The design of the Epistle is, first, to establish the Christian Jews in a well-ordered religious course of life, and to fortify them against suffering from the unbelieving Jews: Secondly, to correct a pernicious error about the sufficiency of a naked faith, and empty profession without practice, &c. which sprung from a misunderstanding and abuse of the way of justification by faith: the design of St. Paul in Ep. Rom. (of which we have the same in Acts iv. 13.) was to manifest that Christ was the only One, and Christianity the only way to set us criminals clear with God, so as to bring us to himself in glory. And St. James shows us that it is not the bare belief and profession of the Christian faith, but the power and practical improvement of it, that must make or render it saving to us.

CHAP. I.

JAMES, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

Observe, here, 1. The author and penman of this epistle described by his name, James; by his office, *a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ*; that is by special office, as a dispenser of his gospel. It is the highest honour that can be conferred upon the greatest person, to be the servant of Christ, especially in the quality of an ambassador. Note also, How St. James styles himself the servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some read the words conjoined, others disjoined; conjoined, thus *James, a servant of Jesus Christ, who is God and Lord*; and thus the fathers urged this text against the Arians, to prove the divinity and godhead of Christ: others read the words disjoined, thus, *James, a servant of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ*. This latter reading seems most natural, and less strained, and affords an argument for proving the divinity of Christ no less weighty than the former; for as the Father is Lord as well as Jesus Christ, so Jesus Christ is God as well as the Father, and God will have all to honour the Son as they honour the Father. Observe, 2. The persons to whom this epistle is directed

to the twelve tribes scattered abroad; that is, to such and so many of the Jews as were converted to Christianity, and were now dispersed and scattered into several countries and nations; to them is St. James excited and moved by God to write and direct this excellent epistle. Here note by the way, these three things: 1. That God's own people in general may be dispersed and driven abroad from their own countries and habitations: it is no new thing to suffer in this kind, *Heb. xi. 38.* those of whom the world was not worthy, wandered in deserts and mountains, woods and caves. Note, 2. The severity of God's justice towards this people of the Jews, in particular; they were a sinning people, a sinful people, weary of God, sick of his worship, severe to his Son; and God grows sick and weary of them, and according to his threatening, *Deut. xxviii. 64.* scattered them from one end of the earth unto the other, among all people. Lord! how dangerous and unsafe it is to rest upon and glory in our outward privileges! None had more, none had greater privileges than the Jews, yet for their sins the land spewed them out and God dispersed them, yea, made them an hissing, and a by-word among the nations. Note 3. The tenderness of God's love and care towards the faithful amongst them in and under this dispersion: he stirreth up St. James to write to the scattered tribes, and to apply seasonable comforts to

them, and to all Christians with them in a suffering state, which accordingly he does throughout this whole epistle.

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Our apostle's design in this epistle being to support the believing Jews under their great sufferings for the cause of Christianity, he first acquaints them with the nature of those sufferings which they might expect to fall under for the same; he calls them *temptations*, that is, trials; they are correcting trials for sin, and they are experimental trials of the truth of grace, and of the strength of grace: the afflictions of God's children are trials—castigatory, probatory trials. Note, 2. The advice given in these trials; to count it joy, all joy, when they fall into temptations, yea, into divers temptations; not that afflictions are in themselves joyous, the temptation or trial is not matter of joy, but of sorrow and heaviness considered in itself, but because of their good effects and sweet fruits, in proving our faith, and increasing our patience. But mark, he says, *When ye fall into temptations*, not when ye run yourselves into them, or draw them upon yourselves; we lose the comfort of our sufferings, when either by guilt or by imprudence we bring them upon ourselves. Note here, That trials, how evil and afflictive soever in themselves, and in their own nature, yet administer occasion of great joy to sincere Christians, *Rom. v. 3. We glory in tribulations*; it denotes the highest joy, even to exultation and ravishment; there is joy resulting from the consideration of the glory that redounds to God, of the honour done to us, of the benefit done to the church and ourselves, by confirming the faith of others; evidencing the sincerity of grace to ourselves, preparing us for, and giving us a swifter passage to heaven. Note, 3. Our apostle's argument to press them to joy in, and rejoice under, their afflictions; and this is taken, 1. From the nature of them, they are trials of faith. 2. From the effect and fruit of them, they beget or work patience. Learn hence, 1. That the afflictions which the people of God meet with, are trials of all their graces, but especially of their faith. This is a radical grace; we live by faith, we work by love: now of all graces, Satan has a particular spite against the Christian's faith, and God has a parti-

cular care for the preservation and perfection of it. *Knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience*: that is, it administers matter and occasion for patience, and by the blessing of God upon it, it produces and increases patience; often trial puts us upon frequent exercises, and the frequent exercise of grace strengthens the habits of grace: consequently the more our trials are, the stronger will our patience be; *Knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience*: it follows, verse 4,

4 But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

That is, "Let your patience and perseverance under sufferings resolutely continue and hold out to the end;" this the apostle urges, because some persons bore out the first brunt and onset of persecution, but being exercised with diversity and length of trials, they fainted. Now, as if the apostle had said, "If we will be complete Christians, our patience must run parallel with our sufferings; thus shall we be perfect, not with an absolute perfection, but with a perfection of duration and perseverance." Learn, That afflictions sanctioned by God do tend exceedingly, not only to the increasing, but perfecting, of a Christian's patience. *Quest.* But when has patience its perfect work, making the Christian perfect and entire? *Ans.* When there is a strong faith, as the foundation of that patience; when there is a Christian fortitude and courage, enabling us to sustain trials; when there is an exact knowledge of our duty to bear afflictions with a meek and quiet spirit, with a bearing, forgiving spirit, yea, with a praying spirit, which includes the height of charity, under the highest provocations; in a word, where there is found with us an entire trust and dependency upon God's power and promise, and a cheerful submission and quiet resignation of our wills to his most holy, wise, and righteous will, in and under the sharpest trials and heaviest afflictions that can befall us; then *has patience had its work*, and the suffering Christian, in a gospel-qualified sense, may be said to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth, is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think

that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

Observe here, 1. A truth necessarily supposed, that every man, more or less, lacketh wisdom to enable him patiently to bear, and prudently to manage, the afflictions of this life; and that there is need of greater wisdom to enable us to glorify God in a suffering hour. Observe, 2. The person directed to, in order to the obtaining of divine wisdom, for the patient bearing of afflictions; *Let him ask it of God.* He that wants wisdom, let him go to the fountain of wisdom. God gives not his blessings ordinarily without asking, and the best of blessings may be had for asking: of the two it is much better to ask and not receive, than to receive and not ask. Observe, 3. A great encouragement for all that lack wisdom to go unto God for it, drawn first from the bountiful manner of his giving. *He giveth liberally*, without upbraiding. Secondly, From the certainty of the gift, *It shall be given him.* God's liberality in giving what we ask, and many times more than we ask, yea, more than we can either ask or think, is a mighty encouragement to faith and fervency in prayer, to perseverance and importunity in praying; especially if we consider what is added, that as God giveth liberally, so he upbraideth not: that is, he neither upbraids them with their frequency and importunity in asking, nor yet with their great unworthiness of receiving; but instead thereof, subjoins an assurance of granting: *It shall be given him.* It is a mighty encouragement to pray, when we consider there is not only bounty in God, but bounty engaged by promise. Observe, 4. The condition required on our part must be observed and fulfilled, as well as the promise made on God's part: *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.* *Quest.* What is it to ask in faith? *Ans.* The person praying must be in a state of believing; the petitioner must be a believer, the thing asked for must be an object of faith, by being the subject matter of some promise; a fervent prayer for that which God never promised, is a foul sin. Again, The manner of asking must be faithful, with a pure intention of God's glory, with cheerful submission to God's will, with fiducial recumbency upon God's promise, with great fervency and warmth of spirit; he that will prevail with Jacob, must wrestle with Jacob for a blessing. Observe, 5. The evil and danger of wavering and doubting in the matter of prayer; the evil of it is this, that it is perplexing and tormenting to the mind: *He that wavereth is driven and tossed like a wave of the sea; an*

elegant similitude to set out the nature of doubting, when upon our knees in duty. And the danger of it is expressed, *Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.* Note, That doubtful and unbelieving persons, when they pray, though they receive something, yet they can expect nothing. Let him not think to receive any thing: if he does, it is more than could be expected, because more than God has promised. Doubting in prayer is a provocation to God; and when a man's prayer is a provocation, how can he expect his prayer should be either heard or answered? *Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

8 A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

By a *double-minded man*, we are to understand one that is divided in his own thoughts between two different ways and opinions, as if he had two minds, or two souls; many such there were in the apostle's days, judaizing brethren, that sometimes would sort with the Jews, sometimes with the Christians. Many such there are in our days, divided betwixt God and the world, between holiness and sin; like a needle between two load-stones, always wavering to and again, pointing frequently to both, but never fixed to either. Such a man, says our apostle, *is unstable in all his ways*; that is, in all his actions. Learn hence, That whilst men's minds are divided between God and their lusts, they must necessarily lead very anxious, uncertain, and unstable lives, always fluctuating in great anxiety and uncertainty; for he is always at odds with himself, and in perpetual variance with his own reason. Where men's minds are double, their ways must necessarily be unstable.

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; 10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. 11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

Our apostle having finished his necessary digression concerning prayer, in the foregoing verses, returns now to his former argument, concerning bearing afflictions with joy; and urges a strong reason here to enforce the duty, *Let the brother of*

low degree, that is, such a Christian as is brought low by persecution and sufferings for Christ, let him rejoice that God has exalted him, and made him rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom. Nothing is more certain, than that the greatest abuses and sufferings for Christ, are an honour and exaltation to us; he adds, *But let the rich rejoice, in that he is made low*, that is, when he loses any thing for Christ. As if the apostle had said, "Let the poor Christian rejoice, in that he is spiritually exalted; and the rich man rejoice, in that he is spiritually humbled: a rich man's humility is his glory." Observe next, The apostle rendereth a reason why the rich man should have a lowly mind, in the midst of his flourishing condition: because all the pomp and grandeur of riches fades like a flower, and he himself is beautiful, but fading; fair, but vanishing. And he pursues the similitude of a flower in the 11th verse, showing, that as the flower fadeth presently before the heat of the scorching sun, so the rich man fades, and all his riches are both transitory and passing. Learn hence, That it may and ought to comfort a Christian that suffers loss for Christ by persecutors and persecution, to consider, that the things which he loseth for the sake of Christ, are things of a fading nature, which could not have been kept long by him, had they not been rent from him: but that which he secures by his perseverance, is an everlasting treasure, reserved in the heavens for him; by parting with that which he could not keep, he makes sure of that which he can never lose. Well therefore may the rich man rejoice in his humiliation: *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, and the rich in that he is made low.*

12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

In these words the apostle lays down a forcible argument, to persuade Christians to bear sufferings and persecutions with invincible patience, drawn from the blessedness which attends such a condition: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.* &c. Note here, 1. The character of the person whom God pronounceth blessed, namely, not the man that escapeth temptations and trials in this life, but he that bears them with courage and constancy, with patience and submission. Note, 2. A description of that ample regard which shall be conferred upon such sufferers:

They shall receive the crown of life. Where observe, the felicity of a future state is set forth by a crown, to denote the transcendency and perfection of it; and by a crown of life, to denote the perpetuity and duration of it. Note, 3. Here is an intimation of the time when this transcendent reward shall be dispensed, namely, when the suffering Christian has finished his course with patience and perseverance: *When he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.* Learn from the whole, That a patient and constant enduring of trials and afflictions in this life, shall certainly be rewarded with a crown of blessedness and immortality in the life to come: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, &c.*

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

There are three sorts of temptations spoken of in scripture, temptations of seduction, temptations of suggestion, and temptations of affliction; the last were spoken of in the former verses, *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.* The second sort are spoken of in this verse, *Let no man say when he is tempted to sin, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted by it, neither tempteth he any man to it.* Note here, 1. That God is not the author of sin, nor tempts any man to the commission of it; if he did, our evil actions could not be properly sins, nor justly punishable by God; for no man can be justly punishable for that which he cannot help, and no man can help that which he is compelled unto; and it is very unreasonable to suppose that the same person should both tempt and punish. To tempt unto sin, is contrary to the holiness of God: and after that to chastise for the complying with the temptation, is contrary to the justice of God; God then is not the author of the sins of men. Note, 2. That men are very apt to charge their sins upon God, and to lay their faults at his door. *Let no man say so; intimating, that men are very ready and apt to say so; and that it is not only a fault, but an impious assertion, to say that God tempts any man to sin.* *Let no man say:* he speaks of it as a thing to be rejected with the utmost degree of detestation,

a thing so impious and dishonourable to God. Note, 3. The reason and argument which the apostle brings against this impious suggestion, *God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man*; that is, he cannot be drawn to any thing that is evil himself, and therefore it cannot be imagined he should have any inclination or design to seduce others. He can have no temptation to sin from his own inclination, for he has a perfect antipathy against it; and there is no allurements in sin to stir up any inclination in God towards it, for it is nothing but crookedness and deformity. And how can he be supposed to entice men to that which his own nature does abominate and abhor? For none tempt others to be bad but those who are first so themselves. Inference, 1. No doctrine then ought to be asserted, or can be maintained, which is contrary to the natural notions which men have of God, as touching his holiness, justice, and goodness. Inference, 2. If God tempts not us, let us never tempt him. This we do, when we tempt his providence, expecting his protection in an unwarrantable way; as when we are negligent in our calling, and yet depend upon God's providence to provide for our families, which is to approve our folly, and to countenance our sloth. Note, 4. The true account which our apostle gives of the prevalency and efficacy of temptation upon men; it is their own innate corruption, and vicious inclination, which doth seduce them to it. *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed.* Mark, He does not ascribe it to the devil; he may and does present the object, and by his instruments may and does solicit for our compliance. His temptations have a moving and exciting power, but can have no prevailing efficacy but from our own voluntary consent; it is our own lust closing with his temptations which produces the sin: for God's commanding us to resist the devil, supposes that his temptations are not irresistible. Learn hence, That man's worst enemy, and most dangerous tempter, is the corruption of his own heart and nature, because it is the inmost enemy, and because it is an enemy that is least suspected. A man's lust is himself, and nature teaches not to mistrust ourselves. What reason have we then perpetually to pray, that God would not lead us into temptation, but keep us by his good providence out of the way of temptation, because we carry about us such lusts and inclinations as will betray us to sin when powerful temptations are presented to us:—There is no such way then to disarm temptations, and take away the power

of them, as by mortifying our lusts, and subduing our vicious inclinations. Note, 5. The account which our apostle gives of the pedigree, birth, and growth of sin: when *lust*, that is, our corrupt inclinations and vicious desires, *have conceived*, that is, gained the consent and approbation of the will, it bringeth forth and engageth the soul in sin; and sin, when it is finished in the deliberate outward action, and especially when by customary practice it becomes habitual, bringeth forth death, the wages of sin: the first approaches of sin are usually modest, but afterwards it makes bolder attempts; our wisdom is to resist the first beginnings of sin, for then we have most strength, and sin least; to suppress sin in the thoughts, to mortify lust in the heart, before it breaks forth in the life, and at last issue and terminate in death: *for when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

As if he had said, "Be not deceived about the causes of good and evil; sin and death are certainly from ourselves. Let us therefore never ascribe either our sins or our temptations unto God; but every good and perfect gift is of God's free donation and grace, even from above, from the Father of lights, (both of the light of nature, and the light of grace,) *with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning* from good to evil; he is unchangeable in his nature and being, and in his attributes and properties." Learn hence, 1. That we are very prone to err in our notions and apprehensions, as touching the authors of good and evil; too ready to conclude either God or Satan to be the author of the sin we commit, and ourselves the authors of the good we do: *Do not err, my beloved brethren*, in this matter. Learn, 2. That as sin, which is nothing but evil and imperfection, is not from God, but wholly from ourselves, and our own corrupt hearts; so whatever is good, perfect, or praise-worthy, is wholly from God, and not from ourselves: we are neither by nature inclined to that which is good, nor are we able of ourselves to perform it; both inclination and ability are from God, who is the fountain of goodness and perfection, and can never cease to be so, for with him is *no variableness nor shadow of*

turning. Learn, 3. That God being the infinite Father of lights, he hath no eclipses or decreases, no shadows or mixtures of darkness, but always shines with a settled and constant brightness, always is, and was, and to all eternity will be, immutably the same, and never undergo the least change, either of his essence and being, or of his properties and perfections: *with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning.* As nothing argues greater imperfection than inconstancy and change, so the greater and more glorious the divine perfections are, the greater blemish and imperfection would mutability be; were God changeable, it would darken all his other perfections, and raze the foundations of all religion; for who could either fear or love, trust or serve, that being who is fickle and inconstant? What security could there be in his promises? and who would regard the terror of his threatenings, were he not invariable, and without shadow of changing?

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

These words are very expressive of four things, namely, of the efficient cause, the impulsive cause, the instrumental and the final cause, of our regeneration. Observe, 1. The author and efficient cause of regeneration; he, that is, the *Father of lights*, mentioned in the foregoing verse, begat us. Note, that God, and God alone, is the prime efficient cause of regeneration; it is subjectively in the creature, it is efficiently from God; Christ appropriates this work to God, *Matt. xi. 23.* The scriptures appropriate it to God, *Psal. xxxiv. 9.* called *his saints*, and God himself appropriates it to himself, *Ezek. xxxvi. 27. I will put my Spirit within them, &c.* Observe, 2. The impelling, impulsive, and moving cause of regeneration, *his own will: Of his own will begat he us*; by his mere motion, induced by no cause, but the goodness of his own breast, of his own will, and not naturally, as he begat his Son from eternity: *of his own will*, and not necessarily, by a necessity of nature, as the sun enlightens and enlivens, but by an arbitrariness of grace; *of his own will*, and not by an obligation from the creature: by the will of God, and not for the merit and desert of man. Observe, 3. The instrumental cause of our regeneration: the word of truth, that is, the gospel, which is the great instrument in God's hand, for producing the new birth in the souls of his people. Here note, The gospel is called *truth*, by way of

excellency, *the word of truth*, that is, the true word: and also by way of eminency, as containing an higher and more excellent truth than any other divine truth; the gospel declares the truth of all the Old-Testament types. Observe, 4. The final cause of our new birth, *That we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures*, that is, of his new creatures, the chief among his creatures; the first-fruits were the best of every kind to be offered to God, and were given as God's peculiar right and portion; thus the new creature is God's peculiar portion taken out of mankind, which being consecrated to God by a new begetting, they ought to serve him with a new spirit, new thankfulness, as lying under the highest obligations unto new obedience.

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: 20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

As if our apostle had said, "Seeing God has put such an honour upon his word, the word of truth, as by it to beget us to himself; therefore be swift to hear it, prize it highly, and wait upon the means of grace readily and diligently; but be slow to speak, that is, to utter your judgment of it, much more slow in undertaking to be a teacher and dispenser of it; also slow to wrath, or to contentions about the words and points of divinity: wrath and passion hinders all profit by the word, either preached, read, or discoursed about; and a forcible reason is rendered why all wrath should be suppressed, because the *wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*; that is, man's sinful anger will never put him upon doing those things which are just and righteous in God's account: or there is a figure in the words; more is intended than expressed; the meaning is, that the wrath of man is so far from working the righteousness of God, that it worketh all manner of evil." Learn hence, That man's anger is usually evil, and very unrighteous: anger, justly moderated, is a duty, but such a duty as is very difficultly managed without sin; rash, causeless, and immoderate anger, gratifies the devil, dishonours God, discredits religion, and wounds our own peace.

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

These words are a direction given for the right hearing of, and due profiting by, the word of God: in order to the former, our apostle shows: 1. What we must lay aside, namely, *all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness*: that is, all sensual lusts and angry passions. And, 2. *Receive with meekness, calmness, and submission, the engrafted word*; that is, the word planted and sown in our hearts by the hands of Christ's ministers: *which is able to save our souls*, that is, from hell and damnation; yet does not the word save of itself, but God by the word; the power of the word is not intrinsic, but extrinsic, derived from God, whose the word is. Learn hence, 1. That as all sin in general, so anger, wrath, and malice in particular, ought to be laid aside by us at all times, but then especially when we go forth to hear the word of God. Learn, 2. That the word must be received with all meekness of spirit, if we would hear it with profit and advantage; there must not be found with us either a wrathful fierceness, or a proud stubbornness, or a contentious wrangling, but humility and brokenness of spirit, docibility, and tractableness of spirit, under the word; otherwise all our hearing will be an addition to our sin, and an aggravation of our condemnation. Learn, 3. That the word must not only be apprehended and received by us, but implanted and engrafted in us, or it will never be able to save our souls: *Receive the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.* *Quest.* But how may we know when the word is an engrafted word? *Ans.* When it is a fruitful word, *Col. i. 6. The word of the truth of the gospel is come unto you, and bringeth forth fruit.* Learn, 4. Though hearing of the word be a duty, yet it must not be rested in; be hearers, but not only hearers. Alas! bare hearing of the word is the least part of Christianity, and the lightest part of Christianity; though we be intelligent hearers, though we be very diligent and attentive hearers, though we be affectionate hearers, yea, though we make great proficiency in knowledge by our hearing, yet all this will deceive us at last, if nothing farther be added to it. Therefore learn, 5. That the doers of the word are the best hearers, yea, the only hearers in God's account: not to hear at all is atheistical, and produces no religion; to hear, and not to know and be affected with what we hear, is stoical, and breeds a blind religion; to know, and not to do, is pharisaical, and breeds a lame religion; the practical hearer is the only approved hearer in the account of God: *A good understanding have they that do thy commandments, Psal. cxi.* Lastly,

Without this, all our hearing is but self-deceiving, and this is the most shameful deceit, the most dangerous deceit, and if timely care and endeavours prevent not, an irreparable and eternal deceit: *Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

In these words our apostle declares the vanity and unprofitableness of a bare hearing of the word, by a similitude taken from a man looking in a glass; though he sees in a glass his natural face which he was born with, whilst he is looking in it, yet no sooner is he gone from it, but he forgets the figure and fashion of his own countenance, having had only a slight and transient view of it; so in like manner the preaching of the word has not an awakening influence, and leaves not an abiding impression upon most hearers, who are willing to be deceived, and to deceive themselves, by a bare and naked hearing of divine truths. Learn hence, that the word of God is a glass, or as a glass, in which the soul's complexion may be seen; in this glass we may see both God and ourselves; Christ's beauty and our deformity; both our disease and our remedy. Learn, 2. That the glass of the word must not be carelessly and cursorily looked into, with a slight and superficial glance; but if we desire to have all the spots and blemishes of our souls thoroughly discovered, we must keep it before our eyes continually, and daily dress our souls by it.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Observe here, 1. The title given to the word of God, particularly the gospel, it is called *liberty*, a law of liberty, and a perfect law of liberty; partly because it calleth us to a state of liberty and freedom, and teacheth us the way to true liberty, and offers us the assistance of a spirit of liberty; partly because it spareth none, but dealeth with all persons freely, without respect of persons: the gospel, or word of God, then, is a law of liberty. Observe, 2. The duty here required, with reference to this law of liberty, namely, to look into it, and con-

tinue therein; to look into it with an accurate and narrow inspection, as the disciples did into Christ's sepulchre, and as the angels look into the mysteries of salvation, 1 *Pet.* i. 12. To look into the law of liberty, implies deepness of meditation and liveliness of impression; and continuing therein, imports perseverance in the knowledge, faith, and obedience, of the gospel, in order to our fruitfulness in good works: *If ye abide in me, and my word abide in you, says Christ, ye shall bring forth much fruit*, John xv. 5, 7. Observe, 3. The reward promised and insured to such as look into the gospel, that law of liberty, that continue in it, and are doers of the word required by it, *they are blessed in their deed*: there is a blessedness annexed to the doing of that work, which the word of God requires; yet mark the distinction of scripture phrase; the apostle doth not say, that the doers of the word shall be blessed for their deed, but in their deed; it is an evidence of our blessedness, not the ground of it, the way, though not the cause, of blessedness.

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridlETH not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

Observe here, 1. That there have been, are, and ever will be, many professors of religion, who seem, and only seem, to be religious. Observe, 2. That an unbridled and ungoverned tongue is a certain sign and evidence of a man's being only seemingly religious; it seems there were many unbridled tongues in the apostle's days amongst the professors of Christianity, which put the apostle upon spending the whole third chapter about the government of the tongue; the grace and word of God are bridles, which we are to put on, to restrain us from sinful and excessive speaking. Observe, 3. That such a man as pretends to religion, and seems to be religious, without bridling and governing of his tongue, all his religion is but vain and self-deceiving; *vain*, that is, empty: in show and appearance only, nothing in truth, and in reality; or *vain*, that is, ineffectual; it doth not perform its office, it does not answer its end, their religion will do them no good, stand them in no stead; that faith, that hope, those prayers, which will consist with the reigning evils of the tongue, are vain and self-deceiving; that religion which cannot drive the devil out of the tongue, will never prove Christ to be in the heart; that religion which cannot tame the tongue, will never save the soul; though some evils of the tongue may consist with

grace, yet an unbridled tongue cannot consist with it: deceit in our lips is as bad as falsehood in our dealings, and virulence in our tongue as bad as violence in our hands; and if thy religion be vain, all is vain to thee; thy hopes are vain, thy comforts are vain. The sum is, that an unbridled tongue, in a religious professor, is enough to prove his religion vain.

27 Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Observe here, 1. That the apostle doth not set down the whole of religion, but an eminent part and instance of it only: *Pure religion is this*: that is, this is the practice of religion, without which all religion is vain; this is eminent fruit, which springs from the root of pure religion; if pure religion live in the heart, the fruits of pious charity will appear in the life. Observe, 2. The acts of charity, when they flow from a religious principle, do commence acts of *Ἐλεος*, *compassion*, *worship*. To visit the widow and fatherless, considered in itself, may be only an act of indifference and civil courtesy; but when it is performed as an act of duty, in obedience to the command of God, or as an act of mercy and pity, for the supply of their wants by our purse, or for the comforting of their hearts by our counsel; being thus done out of conscience, it is as acceptable to God as an act of worship. *To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*. Observe, 3. How the apostle joins charity and purity together; a pretence to the one without the other, discovers the insincerity of both; the relieving of the afflicted, and a life unspotted, must go together, or God accepts of neither: *Pure religion is this, to visit the widow, and keep himself unspotted from the world*; that is, from the defilement and pollutions of the world by the lusts thereof; plainly intimating, 1. That the world is a filthy place, a dirty, defiling thing. What company almost can you come into, generally speaking, that is not sooty and leprous? How hard is it to converse with them, and not be polluted and infected by them? even as hard as it is to touch pitch, and not be defiled. 2. That it is our duty, and ought to be our daily endeavour, to keep ourselves as untainted by and unspotted from the world as we can: and that we may escape the pollutions which are in the world through lust, let us be instant in prayer, diligent in our watch, that if we cannot make the world better, that shall not make us worse. 3. That we should more

and more grow weary of the world, and long for heaven, where there is nothing that defileth, where we shall have pure hearts, pure company, every thing agreeable, and this is not for a few years, but for everlasting ages. Lord! when shall we ascend on high to live with thee in purity!

CHAP. II.

Our apostle's design in this chapter is twofold, namely, first to admonish against that common sin of respecting persons in religious matters because of worldly advantages. Secondly, To caution and warn against that fatal opinion of the sufficiency of a bare naked faith, in order to salvation, without the presence and testimony of works to recommend it to God's acceptance. As touching the former of these, our apostle thus speaks:

MY brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord of glory*, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring in goodly apparel; and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

For the better understanding of these words, let us consider, 1. What the apostle doth not; 2. What he doth, condemn. 1. What is here not condemned, namely, 1. The paying of civil respects to all persons, according to their character, and a different respect to persons, according to their different qualities; honour is to be given to whom honour is due, and the rich are entitled to respect, and that they receive it from us is no ways displeasing unto God. 2. Much less doth our apostle here speak against honouring magistrates, or paying respect to our ecclesiastical or civil rulers and governors in their courts of judicature; civility, yea, christianity, calls for outward respect and reverence to them that are above us, especially if in authority over us. But positively, that which is here condemned, 1. In general, is partiality in our respect to persons in religious matters, for in the things of God all are equal; the rich and the poor stand upon the same terms of advantage; external relations and differences bear no weight at the gospel beam; therefore to disesteem any of the poor members of Christ, as such, is to disesteem and

undervalue Christ himself. Holiness is not less lovely to him because clothed with rags, nor unholiness less loathsome because it goes in a gay coat with a gold ring. Wickedness is abominable to Christ, and ought to be so to us, though it sits upon a throne; and holiness shines in his eye (and may it in ours also) though it lies upon a dunghill. 2. That which seems here to be condemned in particular, is the accepting of persons in judgment, upon the account of outward advantages, proceeding not according to the merits of the cause, in their ecclesiastical and civil judicatures, but according to external respects. Our apostle would by no means have them pay a deference to a rich man in judgment, because of his riches or gay attire; nor to pass over the poor saints in their assemblies, for want of the gold ring or goodly apparel, seeing their faith clothed them with a greater and more valuable glory, which renders them more honourable than any riches or gay clothing could do. And mark the apostle's vehement expostulation, which carries with it the force of a severe reprehension: *Are ye not partial, and become judges of evil thoughts?* As if he had said, "Are ye not condemned in yourselves, and convinced in your own consciences that you do evil? Are you not become judges of evil thoughts? that is, do you not pass judgment upon your evil thoughts, in thinking the rich worthy of respect in judgment for his gorgeous attire, and outward greatness, and the poor fit to be despised for his outward meanness? Is not this an evil, a very evil thought in you, to think him the best man that weareth the best clothes, and him a vile person that is in vile apparel?" From the whole learn, 1. That men are very prone to worldly greatness in general, yea, to give too great a preference to it, even in matters of judgment. Man is very often swayed in judgment by the power, pomp, and splendour of men; we are apt to think that they that are worth most are most worthy; thus men, good men, may misjudge of men; but thus to accept the persons of men, either in spiritual or civil judgment, is a provoking sin.

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?

To prevent the growing evil condemned in the foregoing verse, of undervaluing those that are rich in grace, because poor in estate, the apostle in this verse declares

how God himself gives countenance to the contrary practice; he confers a threefold dignity upon them; they are chosen by him, they are rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven now. As if the apostle had said, "Are they fit to be despised by you, that are thus highly dignified and enriched by God?" And to stir up their attention to what he speaks, he ushers in his interrogations with this, *Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, &c.* Learn hence, That such as are poor in this world, and disesteemed of men, may yet be chosen of God, rich in grace, and heirs of glory. This he does, to demonstrate the sovereignty and freeness of his grace, and the glory of his wisdom. The first choice that Christ made of persons to be his followers were poor men; and ever since, generally speaking, they are the poor that receive the gospel; God has more rent, and better paid him, from a smoky cottage than from many stately palaces, where men wallow in wealth, and forget God.

6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment-seats? 7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

Our apostle here charges them downright with that sin which he had been before condemning, namely, an undue respect of persons, despising the poor, whom God himself hath chosen and honoured: *But ye have despised the poor.* Despising the poor is a sin not only against the word, but against the works of God; it is a sin against his word and express command, backed with a severe threatening, *Enter not into the vineyard of the poor*; that is, *oppress them not, for his avenger is mighty, and God will plead his cause for him.* It is also against his works and his end in creation; for God never made any creature for contempt; he then that despiseth the poor reproacheth his Maker, that is, condemneth the wisdom of God; which is as much seen in making poor as in making rich; in making vallies as in making hills. Observe farther, The apostle shows them what little reason and cause they had, as to vilify the poor, so to idolize and adore the rich: *Do not rich men oppress you, by tyranny, and draw you before the judgment-seat, like the vilest malefactors!* Do not they blaspheme the name of Christ? that worthy name from which you are called Christians, and spit in the very face of your holy religion? Learn, 1. That wicked rich men are oftentimes oppressors, some-

times persecutors: they have frequently both will and power, both disposition and occasion, to do both. 2. That oppressors and persecutors are generally blasphemers: they blaspheme the name of Christ, that worthy name which whosoever nameth, ought to depart from all iniquity, 2 Tim. ii. 19.

8 If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: 9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

Observe here, 1. The honourable title put upon the law of God, a *royal law*; royal in its author, Jesus Christ, Heb. xii. 25. Christ's voice shook mount Sinai: royal in its precepts; the duty it requires of us is noble and excellent, nothing but what is our interest as men, our honour and happiness as Christians, and what tends to the perfecting and ennobling of our natures; royal in its rewards; true, our work can deserve no wages, however, our royal master will not let us work for nothing. Satan, as a master, is bad, his work much worse; but his wages worst of all. Christ is a royal master, obedience to his law is royal service: and how royal is his reward, in making us kings and priests unto God on earth, and crowned kings and princes with God in heaven! Observe, 2. Our duty declared, with relation to this royal law, namely, to fulfil it; *If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scriptures*, that is, if ye pay a sincere respect to the whole duty of the law, if you come up in your obedience to that universal love of God and your neighbour, which the law requires, you do well; where by neighbour, we are to understand every one to whom we may be helpful: the command to love him as ourselves, shows the manner, not the measure, of our love; the kind, not the degree; the parity and likeness, not the equality of proportion: we must mind the good of our neighbour as really and truly, though not so vehemently and earnestly, as our own. Observe, 3. How the apostle convicts them of walking contrary to this law, in honouring the rich and despising the poor, and in judging according to men's outward quality and condition: *If ye have respect to persons in this manner, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.* How does the law convince! not only, by reproof, but by proving: it shows us a rule, and saith, "There ye have departed from it; here is a line, and there ye have transgressed it;

either gone over it, or gone beside it." Learn hence, That the rule of the word discovers wickedness fully to the conscience of the sinner, who winks hard, and is loath to lie under the convictions of it.

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

Here the apostle doth suppose a case which ought to make every person conscientious in his obedience to the whole law of God, namely, that in case a man were careful to observe all the laws of God, except one, his living in the breach of that one shall be so far from being connived at upon the account of his obedience to all the rest, that he shall be liable to the punishment which is due to the transgression of the whole law; to the same punishment for kind, I say, not for degree; because the more and greater sins men are guilty of, the greater and severer shall be their punishment, which consists in being for ever banished from the presence of God, and in being imprisoned with devils and damned spirits, which is called *eternal death*. Learn hence, That whoever allows himself in any one sin, be it either of omission or commission, willingly, constantly, and with allowance from conscience, and doth not convert and turn from it unto God, he is certainly in a state of damnation, because he affronts the sovereignty, and contemns the authority, of that God that made and enacted the whole law, and also stands in a prepared readiness and disposition to break any other, yea, all other laws, in the grossest manner, whensoever any forcible temptation may assault him. Add to this, that living in the breach of any one law, will make a person unmeet for the enjoyment of God, as well as living in the breach of all.

11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

As if the apostle had said, "He that threatened adultery with death, threatened also murder with death: it is the same Lawgiver that forbids both, and his authority is as truly contemned in transgressing one as both these laws. Disobedience to God in any one law, is a virtual denying of his authority to prescribe any law to

us, and lays a foundation for universal disobedience; for if Almighty God's sovereignty be disowned in any one instance, it may as well be so in all others; the same reason that leads to the observation or violation of one law, doth oblige us to keep or break all the rest, and that is the authority of the Lawgiver. The whole law hath an equal obligation upon the conscience." From hence the apostle draws this inference, That persons should so speak and so do, so order their speeches and their actions, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. Note here, 1. That all we say and do, all our actions and expressions, do fall under the judgment and sentence of the law of God. 2. That the law of God, in the hand of Christ, is the law of liberty; we are freed from it as a covenant, freed from its condemnatory curse, freed from its rigorous exactions, bondage, and terrors. The law to a believer is a law of liberty, and to others a law of bondage and death. 3. That it will be a great help to us in our Christian course, to think often that all our words and actions must come into judgment; it is agreeable to the liberty of the gospel to believe and remember that all we say and do must be judged by the law of liberty.

13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

That is, He that whilst he lived showed no mercy, but had opportunity and ability to show it, shall have judgment without mercy; that is, shall be very severely handled by God in the great day, and the sentence that shall pass upon him will be insupportable. But mercy rejoiceth against judgment, or triumpheth over judgment; that is, mercy in some degree of exaltation; such a mercy as has covetousness, hard-heartedness, and penuriousness, with all its enemies, under its feet; such mercy qualifies, strengthens, and enables the person in whom it is found to be confidently secure that he shall receive no prejudice or hurt, but that judgment which God shall pass upon the world at the great day. Learn from hence, That merciful men, whose hearts and hands are much exercised in doing good, and showing mercy, by means of the consciousness of these God-like dispositions in themselves, are, or may be, full of a joyful and blessed security, that they shall stand in the great judgment of the world, and find favour and acceptance in the eyes of the judge; when all unmercifulness, covetousness, and hard-hearted

persons, shall fall under the sentence, and be ground to powder by it; *He shall have judgment without mercy, that showed no mercy; but mercy rejoiceth against judgment.*

14 *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?* 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body: *what doth it profit?* 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

Our apostle here enters upon the second part of his discourse contained in this chapter, namely, to show the vanity of a fruitless faith; that such a faith as is not the parent and principle of obedience, and productive of good works, is altogether ineffectual and unprofitable. Faith of no kind, when it is alone, is justifying; as there can be no good works without faith, so where true faith is it will be fruitful in good works, otherwise faith is no more faith; no believing without obedience will avail us; therefore St. Paul and St. James both agree to render to faith the things that are faith's, and not to take away from works the things that are work's. *What doth it profit a man to say he hath faith, &c.* As if our apostle had said, "Let not any person think his faith sufficient to justify and save him without the works of charity and mercy." Alas! a mere wordy profession is a poor unprofitable thing! What will professing Christianity, and saying we believe, avail to salvation, if we obey not Christ, and live not according to the gospel? Will good words feed the hungry or clothe the naked? Is it not like a mocking of them? Even so a notional knowledge, and a bare profession of faith, if it brings not forth the fruits of holiness and obedience towards God, of justice and righteousness, of love and mercy towards our neighbour, it is an ineffectual, dead thing; like a dead corpse, without a quickening and enlivening soul; it is altogether dead as to justification and salvation. Learn hence, 1. That a fruitless faith is certainly a dead faith. It is dead, because it does not unite us unto Christ; it is lifeless, because there is no liveliness in such a person's performances; for though faith be not always alike lively, yet if sincere, it is always living, and enables the Christian to live unto Christ, and to bear much fruit,

John xv. 5. He that abideth (that is, believeth) in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. Observe, 2. The comparison which St. James here makes between faith and charity; from whence he draws this conclusion, "If charity towards the poor, professed in words, but without works, be counterfeit, then faith in Christ, professed in like manner, without obedience, is also counterfeit and false; but charity towards the poor in words, and not in deeds, is a counterfeit charity; accordingly faith in Christ, without obedience to his command, is a false faith; a dead faith, in regard to the effect, because it will never bring them, in whom it is, to life and salvation."

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

St. James brings in these words by way of dialogue, between a sincere believer that has true faith, and a false-hearted hypocrite that only pretends to it: thus, "Thou sayest thou hast true faith, thou hast no works to evidence its truth; I say, I have true faith, because I have good works, which are the genuine effects and fruits of it. Come we now to the trial, and let it appear who saith true, thou or I: if thou that hast no works, sayest true, prove thy faith to be true some other way. Works thou hast none, show thy faith then by something else; but that is impossible, therefore thou vainly boasted of that which thou hast not: but on the other side, says the sincere believer, I can make good what I say, proving the truth of my faith by the fruits of it in my works; this is a real demonstration that my faith is no vain ostentation, as your's is." This way of arguing is very convincing; it gripes the conscience of the hypocrite, and covers him with shame and confusion of face. Learn hence, That good works are the evidences by which we must judge of our faith now, and according to which Christ will judge of us and our faith at the great day. These two, faith and good works, ought to be as inseparable as light and the sun, as fire and heat. Obedience is the daughter of faith, and faith the parent and principle of obedience.

19 Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

As if the apostle had said, "Be thou either Jew or Christian, thou believest that there is a God, and assentest to the articles

of religion; herein thou doest well: but this is no more than what the devils do; for they also believe and tremble; and if thou hast no better faith, and no better fruit of thy faith than they, thou hast the same reason to tremble which they have." Observe here, 1. That a bare and naked assent to the truths of the gospel, yea, to the fundamental truths and articles of religion, is not faith that will justify and save: the devils have it, yet have no hopes of salvation with it: they believe that there is a God, and a Christ that died for others, though not for them; so that an atheist, that does not believe a God, is worse than a devil; for he believes that there is a God, whose being the atheist denies. Observe, 2. That horror is the fruit and effect of the devil's faith; the more they know of God, the more they dread him: the more they think of him, the more they tremble at him. O God! all knowledge of thee out of Christ is uncomfortable; thine attributes, which are in themselves dreadful and terrible, being beheld by us, in thy Son, do yield comfort and sweetness to us!—*the devils believe and tremble.*

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Our apostle here goes on to prove, that a person is justified by works, that is by a working faith, from the example of Abraham; and the argument lies thus: "If Abraham of old was justified by a working faith, then we cannot be justified without it at this day; but Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God, was justified by a working faith; therefore faith without works will justify no man. As Abraham was justified, so must we and all others be justified because the means and method of justification were ever one and the same, and ever will be uniform and alike. But Abraham was justified by a working faith, his faith was full of life, efficacy, and power, in bringing forth obedience unto God; witness his ready com-

pliance with that hard and difficult command, the offering up of his son Isaac. *Seest thou how faith wrought with his works?* that is, how his faith did both direct and assist him in that work? *Heb. xi. By faith Abraham offered up Isaac, and by works was his faith made perfect,* that is, declared to be perfect; for Abraham was justified five and twenty years before he offered up his Son, but his conquering the difficulties of that work, showed the perfection of his faith; as the goodness of the fruit declares the excellency of the tree, so the fruit of obedience evidenced the sincerity of Abraham's faith." From hence then it may and must be concluded that a barren and empty faith is a dead faith; dead, because it may be found in and with a person dead in trespass and sins; dead, because it receives not the quickening influences of the Spirit of God; dead, because it wants operation, which is the effect of life; dead, because unavailable to eternal life. Observe farther, the honourable character and noble testimony here given of Abraham, for and upon the account of his faith and obedience. *He was called the Friend of God.* All true believers are God's friends; as friends they are reconciled to him, as friends they enjoy communion with him, and communications from him; as friends there is a conformity of wills and affections between them, they like and love, they will and choose, the same things; as friends they desire and long for the complete fruition and enjoyment of each other. Observe lastly, the inference which St. James draws from this instance of Abraham, *Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith.* By faith only, he means faith that is alone, solitary, and by itself, without works. *Quest.* But doth not St. James, by affirming that *by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*, contradict St. Paul, who says, *By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight?* Rom. iii. 20. *Ans.* Not at all, 1. Because they do not speak *ad idem*, to the same thing; St. Paul spoke of justification before God, St. James of justification before men; St. Paul speaks of the justification of our person, St. James of the justification of our faith. 2. They do not speak *idem*, to the same persons: St. Paul had to do with false apostles and judaizing Christians, who sought to substitute the works of the law, and a righteousness of their own, instead of, or at least in conjunction with, the grace of God; but St. James had to do with hypocritical professors, who abused St. Paul's doctrine of free grace, and took encouragement to sin, affirming, that if they believed, it was sufficient, no

matter how they lived; therefore St. James urges the necessity of good works, as evidences of the sincerity of our faith. The sum of the matter is this, What God has joined none must divide, and what God has divided none must join; he hath separated faith and works in the business of justification, according to St. Paul, and none must join them in it; and he has joined them in the lives of justified persons, as St. James speaks, and there we must not separate them. St. Paul assures us, that works have not a co-efficiency in justification itself; but St. James assures us, that they may and ought to have a co-existence in them that are justified.

25. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

Here the apostle declares that Rahab was justified by a working faith, as Abraham was before her, which appeared in her entertaining the spies, lodging them in her house, and dismissing them with all possible privacy, which was a notable evidence of her faith in the God of Israel, her faith being accompanied with great self-denial, and exposing her to a mighty hazard. Indeed, Rahab's faith was mixed with great infirmity, she told a lie; but that is overlooked by God, and her faith only recorded, not her failing divulged. Rahab's lie, Sarah's laughter, Job's impatience, are not mentioned: we discover corruption in the very exercise of our graces; but O! how good a master do we serve, that pardons our infirmities, and accepts our sincerity! Learn hence, That the duties and services of believers, though blemished with many defects, do find acceptance with God, and shall not fail to be rewarded by him. Rahab's faith was seen in receiving the spies, her weakness and infirmity appeared in her lying; God pitied and pardoned the one, and accepted and rewarded the other.

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

In this verse the apostle sums up the whole matter by comparing a dead faith to a dead corpse; as that is imperfect, wanting its best and noblest part: so faith without works wants that which dignifies and completes it. Faith without holiness to enliven it, is a dead body, without the spirit to quicken it. Again, as a dead corpse is useless as well as imperfect; though it has eyes, it sees not; feet, it walks not; mouth, but it speaks not; thus

it is with a dead faith, being unaccompanied with a good life; no believing without obedience, will avail us; for though there is no merit in our obedience that we should be saved for it, yet is there such a necessity of obedience, that we shall never be saved without it. Again, as a dead corpse is noisome to us, so is a profession of faith without obedience loathsome to God; he says to all the workers of iniquity, *Depart from me, I know you not, I approve you not. As the body without the spirit is dead, that is, as the body is known to be dead, if we perceive no vital actions flowing from the soul, so is faith dead, if we see it not demonstrated by effectual operation; as it is necessary to the being of a living body that it be united to the soul, so it is necessary to the being of a living Christian's faith, that it brings forth works of obedience in the Christian's life: For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

CHAP. III.

Our apostle had at the latter end of the first chapter discoursed concerning the evils of the tongue, showing that man's religion to be vain, which doth not teach him to bridle and govern that unruly member, and keep it within the bounds of reason and religion: in this chapter he returns to the same argument, and shows the great necessity we lie under to watch over our words, and to avoid the sins of the tongue, and this both as an argument for our sincerity, and as an ornament to our profession. Accordingly thus he speaks:

MY brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

For the clearer understanding of these words, let us consider, 1. What the apostle does not forbid, namely, private and brotherly admonition, which proceeds from Christian love one towards another, much less does he condemn public and authorized reproof: God has made it the duty of all to admonish and reprove each other charitably; he has made it the duty of others to admonish and censure evil-doers authoritatively; This therefore is not forbidden. Observe, 2. What it is that is here forbidden, namely, such a reviving of others as is supercilious and masterly, managed with sharpness and severity, rashly and rigidly. As if the apostle had said, "Be not magisterial and censorious towards your brethren, as if every one of you had many masters in him." Censuring others is an arrogation of mastership over others and the assuming of a power over them which God never gave us; it is a bold usurpation of God's authority; we may admonish, reprove and warn, but it must not be in a lordly manner, in a

masterly way which is reviling rather than reproving; we must consider what may stand with charity, as well as what will consist with truth; every evil must not be divulged, but some must be covered with a cloak of love; there may be, and oft-times is, a great deal of malice in reporting truth. Observe next, the remedy prescribed against censuring others, namely, the considering ourselves that we shall thereby receive the greater damnation; sharp reprovers in judging others, pronounce a doom upon themselves; such as reprove either out of office, or out of charity, ought to look to themselves, lest in reproving others they condemn themselves.

2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

As if the apostle had said, "We had need be very candid in censuring others, for we all of us offend in many things ourselves, especially with, and by our tongue, which is an engine of more mischief, both to ourselves and others, than any other member of the body;" and accordingly he is called here, not a gracious man, but a perfect man, one that has attained to the fullest measures and highest degrees of grace, that can bridle his tongue: to be able to bridle the tongue is an argument of considerable growth and happy progress in grace; he that can bridle his tongue, can bridle his whole body, that is, govern all the other actions of his life; he is a very extraordinary Christian.

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

As we rule the whole body of a horse by a bridle in its mouth, so by bridling our tongues we shall rule and govern all the actions of our lives. Note, That as hot and hard-mouthed horses, so the tongue of man is apt to run out, unless well bridled; nor is any bridle strong enough to hold it in, but the bridle of grace; nay, not that at all times. The grace of God is both spur and bridle to the tongue of man: grace, like a spur, provokes to speak for God, and for the good of others; and grace, like a bridle, stops us from speaking what may grieve the Spirit of God, and justly offend others. None rule their tongues well without grace, and every one that has grace doth not rule them well; it is a great part of perfection not to offend in word.

4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven

of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm whithersoever the governor listeth. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

The design of our apostle by this and the former similitude, is to show, that little things well governed, can govern great bodies, as the rider by a small bit can govern the horse at pleasure, and the pilot by a small rudder can manage the ship with ease; so the government of that little member, the tongue, is a special mean for governing the whole man. Next he compares the tongue to fire, in regard to the danger that attends it: Will a spark of fire set an house, a town, a city, in a flame, and lay it in ashes? In like manner will a fiery tongue inflame a family, a society, a church, a kingdom, yea, the whole world, by strife and contention, putting all into combustion; such a tongue being set on work by the devil, and kindled by that fire which came from hell; but verily, a tongue set on fire from hell, shall, without repentance, be set on fire in hell. Learn hence, That a wicked tongue is of an hellish original, the fire of such a tongue is blown up by the breath of hell: let us abhor contentions, revilings, and reproaches, as we would hell itself.

7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

Our apostle here goes on in showing how difficult it is to govern the tongue; it is wilder than the wildest beasts, they are more tractable, and may be sooner tamed than a tongue be governed; it is an *unruly evil*, that will not be held in. Nature has set a doubleguard about the tongue, namely, the teeth and the lips, and grace has laid many restraints upon it, and yet it breaks out full of deadly poison: intimating, that the tongue is as deadly as a venomous beast. In the wild desert there are lions, bears, and tigers, but these assault us but now and then, and can only rend the skin; but a contentious tongue is always troublesome to the soul and spirit. Man tameth the beasts, and God tameth man; and the

apostle's calling the tongue *an unweary evil, full of deadly poison*, plainly imports, that a wicked tongue is venomous and hurtful; a slanderous tongue is a deadly poison, nothing can secure against it but innocency and a good conscience; if we fall by it, let this comfort us, that there will be a resurrection of our names, as well as of our persons; let us always then keep in the way of our duty, and commit our good name to God's care and keeping.

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. 11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place *sweet water* and bitter? 12 Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle informs us what is the proper use of the tongue; namely, to bless and praise God; speech being the most excellent faculty, is to be consecrated to divine uses: it is both a good man's work and his recreation to bless and praise God. Observe, 2. The sinful use which some men put the tongue unto, and that is, to curse with it, to curse men that have the natural image of God upon them, yea, holy and good men, that have the divine image of God instamped upon them; this is the abuse of some men's tongues, their *mouth is full of cursing and bitterness*. Observe, 3. The same tongue cannot, should not, bless God and curse men; to pray and brawl with the same tongue, is shameful hypocrisy; to go from worshipping to railing and reviling, to speak to the God of heaven with a tongue set on fire of hell, is a monstrous impiety. Observe, 4. How the apostle discovers the mighty absurdity of blessing and cursing with one and the same tongue, and of putting the best member to the worst use: the good aggravates the evil, and the evil disparageth, yea, disproveth, the good; to suppose that the same tongue should acceptably bless God, and at the same time sinfully curse men, is as irrational and absurd as to imagine that the same fountain should send forth salt water and fresh, sweet water and bitter; and as if a fig-tree should bring forth olives, or a vine bear figs. Our apostle argues and reasons from what is impossible in nature, to what is absurd in manners; contrary effects from

the same cause is against the order of nature: in like manner grace is uniform, and always acts like itself: to bless and curse, to pray and revile, is wholly inconsistent with grace. Nature abhors contradictions, and so does the grace of God. Though a Christian has a double principle in him, the *flesh* and the *spirit*, yet he has not a double heart; his spirit is single and sincere in what he does, in all he does, both for God and man.

13 Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him show, out of a good conversation, his works, with meekness of wisdom.

As if our apostle had said, "If any among you desire to approve yourselves more knowing than others, wiser and better than others, as you would be thought when you censure and despise others, show it to the world by a better conversation, by your abounding fruitfulness in good works, and by such meekness of spirit as will be an evidence of true wisdom." Hence we learn, That the wise man is a meek and patient man: as pride and folly, so wisdom and meekness, are companions; the more wisdom a man has, the more he can check himself and curb his passion. Moses is renowned in scripture for his wisdom and for his meekness; we all affect the reputation of wisdom, let us discover it by humility, in being lowly within ourselves; and by our meekness in bearing with and forbearing one another; yet must our meekness be a wise meekness, it must be a meekness of wisdom; our meekness must be opposite to fierceness, but not to zeal; Moses was very meek in his own cause, but as hot as fire in the cause of God. Meekness and zeal are consistent; let us then *show out of a good conversation our works with meekness of wisdom*.

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. 15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. 16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle points at the root of all tongue-evils: we pretend zeal and justice, zeal for God, and doing right to ourselves, but the true cause is *envy*, called *bitter envyings*, as being bitter in its root, bitter in its fruit, bitter to others, bitter to ourselves; this is a painful evil, an unprofitable evil, a foolish sinful evil; it makes another's good our grief. But why so? The good of another is no hurt

to us; we have not the less because another has more. Leah's fruitfulness was no cause of Rachel's barrenness; why then should it be the occasion of Rachel's envy? Thy portion is not impaired because thy brother's is increased. Observe, 2. How envy and strife are here joined together; if you have *envying and strife* in your hearts: when envy is found in the heart, strife will soon be found in the tongue, for envy is the mother of strife; natural corruption doth most of all betray itself by envy; it has an early spring and late autumn; we have it as soon as we come into the world, and it is an hard matter to leave it before we go out of it again: children suck it in with their milk, and the old man buries it in his coffin. Observe, 3. What are the bitter effects and fruits of envy and strife, namely, *confusion*, and *every evil work*: an envious spirit is an unquiet and wicked spirit; the devil worketh by no instruments more than by envious, discontented, and malicious persons. Pride and envy were the two first sins that crept into the world: the first man was ruined by pride, the second destroyed by envy: the whole world could not hold two brothers, when the one was envied by the other. Cain's envy tasted blood, and verily the sinner's envy thirsts after it; well therefore may the apostle say, *Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work: this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.*

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

Our apostle here enters upon a comparison between earthly wisdom and spiritual heavenly wisdom; between wisdom that is not, and wisdom that is, from above. Observe, 1. That wisdom which is not from above characterized and described. 1. It is *earthly*, it is suited to earthly minds, and it is employed about earthly things. Earthly wisdom is mere folly: it is said to be wise only for this world, and to have such an unsavory spirit as will relish nothing but what is earthly. 2. *Sensual*; such wisdom as tendeth only to gratify the senses, and is conversant about outward pleasures, which are the pleasures of the beast, and not of the man; such sensual satisfactions do only please the sensitive appetite, which it is the highest rational pleasure to mortify and subdue. 3. *Devilish*; because it is such wisdom as is found in the devil; he is only wise to do mischief. As a man has a fleshly part in common with the beast,

so there are some sins which the scripture calls *fleshly and beastly lusts*, as uncleanness, riot, excess, and the like; but as a man has somewhat in common with the angels, namely, in spirit and soul, so there are some sins which are called Satan's lusts, *John viii. 44. His lusts ye will do.* Thus envy, pride, wrath, revenge, malice, slander, these sins make a man devilish, like unto Satan; hence is St. Paul's exhortation, *2 Cor. vii. 1. To cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.* Lord, pity the deplorable ruins of mankind, compassionate fallen man, who has not only somewhat of the beast, but also somewhat of the devil, in him by nature! O deplorable degradation! And should he sacrifice himself, he could not save himself without a sanctifier; he must be restored to the divine likeness here, or never enjoy his Maker hereafter. Observe, 2. He next describes *spiritual wisdom* to us, and that, first, by its original, it is from above. All wisdom is known by its descent; carnal wisdom is of the earth, earthly; spiritual wisdom is from above, and has an heavenly author, and its original and descent is heavenly; *The wisdom that is from above.* Secondly, He describes spiritual wisdom by its effects and fruits, by its properties and qualities, and reckons up eight of them. 1. True wisdom is *pure* and holy wisdom, and sinless craftiness. The heart of such a person is clean, though not wholly free from sin, and his way is undefiled: this pure wisdom will not brook the filthiness either of error in judgment, or sin in practice. Error is a blot as well as sin, and is as damnable as sin; the one is an open road, the other a secret path, to hell and destruction; he that is wise and has a due care of his soul's salvation, will be as much afraid of erroneous principles as he is of debauched practices. 2. *Peaceable*; true wisdom teaches to avoid all strife and contention. There is a sweet connection between wisdom and peace; the wisest are the meekest men; they are peaceable and peace-makers; not ready to provoke others, nor easily provoked themselves. Such as see most need of pardon from God, are most ready to pardon others, to live peaceably with all. Yet note, Though wisdom be *pure* and *peaceable*, yet it is first pure, then peaceable; as God is the first and best of beings, so purity is the first and best of blessings: the chief care then must be for purity and truth; but next to purity we must regard peace. Truth must be preferred, but peace must not be neglected; we must treat with God by prayer, and treat with man by condescension, as far as a good conscience will suffer, for

obtaining and preserving peace: *The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable.* 3. True wisdom is *gentle*, in opposition to strife and contention; the word also signifies moderate and patient, *Phil. iv. 5. 1 Tim. iii. 3.* Such a Christian is moderate in doubtful opinions, moderate in his judging of others, moderate and patient in his whole conversation, receding sometimes from his own right for peace sake. 4. *Easy to be entreated*; not inflexible, but persuadable. He that has an inflexible will, had need have an infallible judgment. Indeed there may be a flexibility and easiness to a fault; some good natures (as they are called) are easily drawn away to sin by evil company and wicked counsel; in such a case to turn a deaf ear to all entreaties is not obstinacy, but religious resolution. 5. *Full of mercy*; this has a double object, such as want, and such as offend; and so there is mercy in giving and in forgiving. It is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression, and the honour of a Christian to put on bowels of mercy; without this garment we shall appear naked at the bar of God. 6. *Full of good works.* Religion is not a dry rod, but it blossoms and brings forth fruit; fruits of humanity and civil courtesy, as well as fruits of piety and pious charity; when we begin to be religious, we must not leave off to be kind and courteous: *Be pitiful, be courteous,* 1 Pet. iii. 8. 7. *Without partiality*; that is, without making any difference between person and person, because of outward respects, which is an high point of wisdom; folly discovers itself in nothing more than by doting upon outward splendour. Fools, like children, count nothing good but what is gay; but wisdom teaches us to value and put an estimate upon persons and things, according to their intrinsic worth, and doeth nothing by partiality. 8. *Without hypocrisy*; in true wisdom there is no prevailing guile, but a true simplicity and godly sincerity found with it, and this is the highest piece of wisdom; the hypocrite is the greatest fool; the sincere Christian is the truly wise, and the only wise man. *The wisdom from above is pure and peaceable, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

18 And the fruits of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

Our apostle here concludes his discourse by showing the happiness of those who are possessors of that wisdom from above, which is *pure and peaceable, &c.* They sow a seed which will yield them present fruit, and bring sheaves of joy and comfort into their

bosoms, and also entitle them to an everlasting reward in that kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness. Learn hence, 1. That all the actions of this life are as seed sown for the life to come; and every one's harvest hereafter will be according to his seed-time here; our rewards shall be according to our works. Learn, 2. That the rewards of righteousness and peaceableness are reaped, and received here initially; and shall be ere long enjoyed perfectly: *The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that love peace.* Learn, 3. That true lovers of righteousness ought to be lovers of peace, and peaceable persons lovers of righteousness; mercy and truth must meet together, righteousness and peace must kiss each other. Peace without righteousness is but a sordid complaisance; righteousness without peace is but a rough austerity: our duty is to couple a sweet goodness with a severe righteousness.

CHAP. IV.

Our apostle having showed in the foregoing chapter the exceeding evil of strife and contention, he comes in this chapter to discover the root from whence all this proceeds, namely, from men's carnal lusts and corrupt affections; accordingly thus he speaks:

FROM whence come wars and fightings among you? *come they not hence, even of your lusts and war in your members?*

The Jews, to whom St. James directed this epistle, had at that time great wars and fightings, not only with their neighbours, but even among themselves. In every city there were wars and fightings among them. Now the apostle here puts it to their conscience to tell and declare whence these animosities and contentions, those wars and fightings, did proceed: *Come they not hence, even from your lusts?* Plainly intimating that the cause of all civil dissensions are men's corruptions. War stirs first within, before it breaks forth without; were there not a fight in ourselves, there would be no fighting with others. Lust within is the make-bate in all societies and communities without. Pride and covetousness, envy, and ambition, make men injurious to one another; worldly and sensual lusts first war in ourselves, before they disturb the common peace.

2 Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and re-

ceive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

The Jews, at the time of writing this epistle to them, did vehemently lust after liberty, and freedom from the Roman yoke, and for dominion and government over other nations; believing that their Messiah was to be a temporal prince, who should enable them to lord it over the heathen world. "Now, says our apostle, though you lust for liberty and dominion, yet you have it not; and though in an eager pursuit after these things, ye kill and slay, yet you do but lose your blood and labour, for you cannot obtain what you thus inordinately seek, and irregularly covet; you should go to God in prayer for what ye desire. But if at any time you do pray, it is not in a right manner, with a right intention, and for a right end. It is to consume it upon your lusts; namely, that having the liberty you desire, you may possess the good things of this world you lust after, and may lord it over the heathen world." Learn hence, That we pray amiss when our aims and ends are not right in prayer. Learn, 2. That then our aims and ends are not right in prayer, when we ask blessings for the use and encouragement of our lusts. Learn, 3. That prayers so framed are usually successful; what we ask amiss we are sure to miss, if the Almighty has any kindness for us. In prayer we must consider three things, the object, the manner, and the end: we must not only guard our affections, but secure our intentions; for prayers that want a good aim do also want a good issue: *Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.*

4 Ye adulterers, and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.

It is a spiritual, not a corporal adultery, which these words take notice of: the inordinate love of this world is called spiritual adultery, because it draws away the love of the soul from God, and dissolves the spiritual marriage between God and the soul: *Ye adulterers, and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world, which stands in competition with, and indisposes you for the doing of God's will, is enmity with God?* And that whosoever will be thus a friend of the world is the enemy of God? To love the world as God's competitor, is enmity to God; and he is God's enemy that loveth it predominantly. Learn we to love every creature with a

creature love; for God reckons we love him not at all, if we love him not above all.

5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

Some by the *spirit* here understand the Holy Spirit of God, and make the words run in the form of an interrogation, thus: "The Spirit that dwelleth in us Christians, lusteth he to envy as yours doth? Nay, rather is he not the spirit of love and goodness?" Others understand our own spirit; our corrupt nature is mightily carried forth this way, even to envy the good of others, it is usual in scripture to call the bent and propension of the soul, either to good or evil, by the name of spirit. Note hence, That God's own people have much, too much, of a spirit of envy remaining in them, unmortified and unsubdued by them: *The spirit that is in us lusteth to envy?*

6 But he giveth more grace: wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

The sin of envy being censured before our apostle next condemns the sin of pride: he uses a military term when he tells us that *God resisteth the proud*; it signifies, that he sets himself as in battle-array against the proud, in a direct opposition to him: there are no sort of sinners whom God sets himself so much against to punish and plague, as proud sinners. Such are wholly out of his favour; he beareth them afar off, and they are the subjects of his high displeasure; like naked men in an army, they stand exposed to his wrath, they have no shelter, nothing to keep off the threatening from them: for there can be no shelter from divine wrath, but in divine love. There are two eminent works of divine providence in the world; the one is to lift up and exalt the humble, and the other is to abase and pull down the proud. Some pride themselves in their natural parts, others in their acquired parts; some in their moral virtues and evangelical graces, others in their holy duties and spiritual performances; we seldom do well, but we think too well of ourselves. Learn hence, That pride is a common sin, and a provoking, yea, a very provoking sin, and so must needs be, because it is an usurpation of the place and power of God, and sets itself against all the commands and threatenings of God: *God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble.* Grace, that is, 1. Favour; the humble shall have his favour, and the proud his frowns. 2. God giveth grace

that is, more grace, farther measures of grace, to the humble; as we lay up our richest wines in the lowest cellars, so does God lodge his choicest graces in humble and lowly hearts: he giveth not only grace, but more grace, to the humble; such as are low in their own eyes, are under the special protection and direction also of the most high God.

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

That is, "Submit to his government and authority, to his preceptive commanding will, and to his providential and disposing will; submit yourselves to the guidance of his word, to the direction of his Spirit, to the conduct of his providence; submit your whole selves to the whole law and will of God; let all your thoughts, affections, words, and actions, be guided according to the strict rules of the word of God; but *resist the devil*, by no means submit or yield an inch to him; the only way to overcome Satan is, not by yielding to him, but by resisting and opposing of him. Satan is both a conquered enemy and a cowardly enemy; though he has a bold face, yet a faint heart; *resist him, and he will flee from you*. Observe here, 1. The devil's active enmity and continual hostility against man, implied and supposed; Satan is continually busy with us, that is, the apostate spirit, and the spirit of apostasy lodged in our natures. Wherever we see malice, revenge, envy, hatred, pride, and self-love, there is that evil spirit which is so inimical and injurious to us, that is, *Venenum Serpentis Diabolici*, "The sting and poison, the very soul and spirit, of the apostate nature." Observe, 2. The Christian's duty discovered, and that is, not to yield, but resist and oppose: we must either resist him, or be taken captive by him; if we do not resist him, we shall never get rid of him. If once we parley and treat with him, we must expect to be triumphed over, and trampled upon by him. Observe, 3. The certainty of success declared, *He will flee from you*; every denial is a discouragement to Satan, the strength of his temptations lies in our treachery and falseness; we are false within ourselves, otherwise all his power and malice could not hurt us; however, if we continue our resistance, the Holy Spirit will come in with his assistance, he will be our second in the field, and we shall find, that stronger is he that is in us, than he that is in the world; the God of peace will bruise Satan under our feet shortly.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you:—

Observe here, 1. Man by nature, since his fall, is far off from God, not barely by a natural distance as a creature, but also by a moral distance as a sinner. God made man near him, but when man sinned he departed from him; now we draw nigh to God by conversion, and in all the actings of repentance: there is a first and a second conversion; a first conversion from a sinful state, a second conversion from sinful acts; by both we draw nigh to God: but the drawing nigh to God here principally intended, is by approaching to him in prayer, and in the use of every holy ordinance; an humbling of the soul before God, is a drawing nigh unto him; hence it is that good men delight so much in prayer, and other holy duties, they meet with God in them, and draw near to God by them; and they that meet with God, meet with all delights. Observe, 2. As the duty required, *Draw nigh to God*, so the encouragement annexed, *He will draw nigh to you*; God will certainly draw nigh to that Christian in a way of mercy, who prepareth his heart to approach and draw near to him in a way of duty. The Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him, nigh to comfort, nigh to quicken, nigh to guide, nigh to support.

—Cleanse your hands, ye sinners: and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.

Mark! To signify to us our deep pollution and universal pollution; we are called upon both to cleanse and to purify, and that both our hands and our hearts. *Quest.* But why is cleansing of the hands set before purifying the heart? Must we sweeten the streams before the fountain? *Ans.* It is not usual in scripture to put that first which is visible first, as *calling*, before *election*, 2 Pet. i. 10. and because grace (having once entered the heart) discovers itself by an immediate cleansing of the hands; so that if we would have an holy life, we must get a clean heart. Learn, 1. That unclean persons can have no communion with God. 2. That they who draw nigh to God, must cleanse their hands, because the sins of our hands do keep us at a distance from God, and God at a distance from us. Commerce with God in an ordinance is one thing, and communion with him is another; a man may have a commerce or trade with an enemy for profit-sake, whilst he refuses to hold communion with him in a way of friendship and intimacy of acquaintance. Learn, 3. That double-

double-minded men have corrupt hearts; double-mindedness is a dividing the heart between God and something else; whereas God calls for the whole heart, the whole mind, the whole soul, the whole strength. Learn, 4. That this double-mindedness hinders both our drawing nigh to God, and God's drawing nigh to us; an heart divided between God and the world, between conscience and lust, between religion and self-interest, will hinder all intercourse and sweet communion betwixt God and us in the duty of prayer. *Cleanse therefore your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.*

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

The next duty we are exhorted to by the apostle, is a deep humiliation, and a voluntary afflicting of our souls before God for sin, and upon the account of any calamity either in ourselves or others. Learn hence, That as the afflicting hand of God does increase upon a person, a family, or a people, so ought the humiliation and mourning of that person, family, or people, to increase; we ought not only to be humbled when God afflicts, but also to be humbled in proportion to what God inflicts: great afflictions call for great humiliations. Woe to that person, that family, or that people, who will not be afflicted when God afflicts them, nor humble themselves when God humbles them; who, when God casts them down, will hold up their heads in mirth and jollity. God loves to see us bear our cross, but he cannot endure to see us make sport with it, or slight of it. If God once perceives us driving away our sorrow with harp and viol, or drowning it with wine, he can quickly turn our wine into water, and our laughter into the voice of weeping. Now is it not better to turn our mirth into mourning, than to have God turn it into mourning? They who turn their mirth into mourning, shall find comfort after their mourning; but they shall know nothing but mourning, whose mirth God turns into mourning. *Be afflicted, therefore, and mourn, and weep.* *Quest.* But how comes the apostle to make use of so many words in one purpose, *Be afflicted, mourn, weep, humble yourselves, &c.* *Ans.* All these heaps of expressions do import and imply 1. The necessity of the duty. 2. The difficulty of the duty. 3. The continuance of the duty; and accordingly much enforcement is necessary: flesh and blood loves plea-

sure, but declines sorrow and heaviness; nature loves no bitter draughts, though bitter things are sometimes the best things; therefore the apostle's call to afflict our souls, and humble ourselves in the sight of God, is repeated; and mark the encouragement given us thus to do, *Humble yourselves in the sight of God, and he shall lift you up.* Submission and humility is the true way to exaltation and glory; the way to rise is to fall; *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted*, Luke xiv. 11. *He shall lift thee up in due time*, 1 Pet. v. 6. Wait God's leisure, and the promise shall surely be fulfilled; the world looketh upon humility as the way to contempt, but God pronounces it the way to honour; *Before honour is humility.*

11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. 12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

These words, as generally delivered by our apostle, are a dissuasive from the sin of detraction, or speaking evil of one another, either by secret whispering, or open back-biting; a very common but most unbecoming sin amongst Christians. What pleasure do some persons take in divulging the faults of others, in aggravating their faults, in defrauding them of their necessary excuse and mitigation, though at the same time they are conscious of it, by lessening their good actions through the supposition of their false aims and ends? It is an injurious and unworthy jealousy, when a person's actions are fair, to suspect his intentions, by mentioning his failings, but suppressing his worth and excellences. It becomes Christians neither to give way to this growing evil themselves, nor give ear to it in others. But there seems to be something special and particular in these things, which respects the Jews, to whom this epistle is directed; as if the apostle had said, "Give over your reproach and censoriousness against the Gentile Christians, who do not observe your ceremonial law, your feasts, your sabbath, your circumcision; for both the law of Christ and the law of Moses, which you profess to own, do bind you to love your neighbour as yourself, and forbids such uncharitable censures; so that by condemning your brethren you condemn the law, and set yourselves above it, and

all this in contempt of the law, and the lawgiver, who is one, and is able both to save and to destroy." There are some that are neither able to save nor to destroy; there are others able to destroy, but cannot save. Satan is a destroyer, but he cannot save any, nor can he destroy all; if he could, none should be saved. But there is a Lawgiver, who can save and destroy, who can give life and take it away, and both as often as he will. He can save those that obey the laws, and destroy all those that transgress them: therefore seeing Christ, and none but Christ, has authority to give laws, it is not for you to impose ceremonial observances upon your brethren, and to censure and judge them for not observing them, when Christ has set them at liberty from the observation of them.

13 Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow: For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. 16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

For the clearer understanding of these words, consider, 1. What is not here forbidden or condemned by our apostle, namely, prudential resolutions for a right management of human affairs; it is lawful for men to take up a purpose to go to such a place, and follow their trade there, to buy, and sell, and get gain, in an honest way; but no man must be peremptory in this, because we know not what shall be on the morrow; such determinations must be made with submission to divine providence: *If the Lord will, we shall do this or that*, referring all to his pleasure, who alone doth whatsoever pleaseth him. Consider. 2. What is hereby intimated to us, and what is the duty incumbent upon us, namely, 1. That we have no assurance of our lives, nor of any of the comforts of our lives, for one day, and therefore ought to refer all our actions, our enterprises, and undertakings, to the will of God. *What is your life? It is but a vapour; therefore ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall do this or that.* 2. That in regard of the great frailty of our lives, and the great uncertainty of issues and events, it is the height of presumption to promise ourselves great

things, without the leave of God's providence; as our times are in God's hands, so are our actions also in God's power, both as to the performance of them, and as to the success of them: *Say not then, To-day, or to-morrow, will we go into such a city; for that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall do this or that.*

17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

Observe here, 1. That the sins of ignorance are sins, and render men greatly culpable, though ignorance will in some degree lessen their punishment. Observe here, 2. That to sin against light and knowledge is a very heinous aggravation of sin, because the knowledge of our duty lays us under the greatest obligations to do it. 3. That the greater advantages and opportunities any man has of knowing his duty, and the more knowledge he sins against in not doing it, the greater is his sin, and the more grievous will be his condemnation.

CHAP. V.

GO to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

These words may be considered either relatively or absolutely. Consider them, 1. With relation to the Jews, to whom they were written immediately, and they are a prediction or denunciation of that judgment which was coming upon the rich men in the Jewish nation; which prediction, Josephus assures us, was fulfilled by the slaughter and spoiling of the rich Jews throughout Galilee and Judea, the zealous sparing none but the poor and low: thus did the vengeance of God, and does to this day pursue and follow that wicked people, who killed the Lord of life, and their own prophets, who brought judgment on themselves to the uttermost. Consider the words absolutely in themselves, and they are a severe and cutting reprehension to covetous rich men, for their sordid sparing of that wealth which God had given them for public service. And the apostle gives us, 1. A description of their sin. 2. A

declaration of their punishment. Observe, 1. A description of the sin of the covetous rich worldlings; they chose rather to have their goods to be corrupted and spoiled, than to be employed to good uses: their victuals might have refreshed the bowels of the hungry, but they rather suffered them to putrify and stink; the garments which lay useless in their wardrobes might have clothed the backs of their naked brethren, but they had rather let them be moth-eaten; their gold and silver might have been applied to many good uses, but they had rather it should be cankered, and rust in their chests. Observe, 2. The punishment denounced against them for this their sin: the rust of their gold and silver *shall witness against them*: that is, their consciences shall at once convince them of their base covetousness, and torment them for it: and this corroding of their consciences shall leave an impression upon their bodies, it shall eat their flesh as it were fire; and all their treasure which, with wrong to others, and violation of their own consciences, they had heaped together, was but heaped up for the spoiler, and the violence of the last days. Learn from the whole, 1. That it is hard to possess riches without sin, and hard matter to have them and not be hindered from heaven by them. Learn, 2. That a covetous hoarding and sordid sparing of wealth, which our suffering brethren want, brings a curse both upon our persons and estates. 3. That sore miseries and dreadful judgments shall come upon wicked rich men, which, if believably apprehended, would cause them now to weep and howl. We do no hurt with our wealth, say some. Aye, but what good do you do with it! Where are the poor members of Christ, whom you have relieved from the superfluities of your table! But can many say truly, They have done no harm with their estates! Lord! what carelessness in religion, what contempt of God, what riot and excess, is found amongst many that abound in wealth, who expend more upon a lust in one day, than would maintain a poor family many years! Learn, 4. That in the day of judgment, not only our actions, but all the circumstances of our actions, shall be brought forth, and produced as arguments of conviction: the rusty iron, the cankered silver, the moth-eaten clothes, shall be produced; the stones of the wall, built by oppression, shall cry, "Lord, we were built by oppression and violence:" and the beam out of the timber shall answer it, *True, Lord, even so it is*, Hab. ii. 11. The circumstances of men's sins at the great day will be so many memorials to put them in mind

of guilt, and God in mind of vengeance: *Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of it shall witness against you.*

4 Behold, the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

The next sin which our apostle convicts the rich of, and condemns them for, is the sin of oppression, and that of the worst sort, even of labourers and servants; their covetousness was the cause of this oppression. There is no sin so heinous and base, but covetousness may be a mother or a nurse to it. What more sordid than for the rich master to detain the wages of the poor labourer? yet, *behold, the hire of the labourers crieth*; though they did not, durst not, yet their hire kept back did complain. Learn hence, That as all oppression is very sinful, so especially the detaining of the labourers' wages when their hire is delayed or denied, both are exceeding sinful: and accordingly we find oppressors in scripture joined with the vilest of sinners, even with sorcerers, adulterers, and false swearers. And to testify that God cannot want witnesses against oppressors, he tells us, their hire shall cry as well as the poor themselves: "The beam and the stone out of the wall shall cry." *Hab. ii.* Remember we then that secret wrongs are known to God: the poor may not always know who wrongs them, but the Lord fully knows, and their wrongs and oppressions will cry against us, when they know not against whom to cry. And note, The person gloriously described who is the poor's avenger; he is the *Lord of Sabaoth*, or the Lord of hosts, who has all power in his hand, and all creatures at his command. How bold and daring then is the oppressor to afflict the poor, who have the Lord of hosts for their avenger! *Their cry is entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.*

5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

The next sin he charges upon them is sensuality, luxury, lasciviousness, their eating and drinking to excess in their feasts, pampering themselves for the slaughter and the shambles. These are sins very natural to corrupt nature, but chiefly incident to the rich. Pride, idleness, fulness of bread, and living in plea-

sure, are too frequently sins that do abound in rich men's houses: though their abundance is no excuse, but rather an aggravation of their sin. God allows us to use pleasure, but not to live in pleasure; and by calling it pleasure upon earth, he intimates, 1. That sensual delights are only enjoyed here in this world: 2. That their desires ran after these earthly pleasures only. The pleasures of the beast only pleased them; whereas the delights of sense are so far from being the chief pleasures for which God designed us, that on the contrary he intended we should take our chief pleasure not in gratifying, but in restraining our sensual appetite, in reducing that rebellious power under the government and dominion of reason and religion.

6 Ye have condemned *and* killed the just; *and* he doth not resist you.

By the *just* may be understood *Jesus Christ*, that *just One*, whom the nation of the Jews condemned and killed; and also such of his members, orthodox Christians, whom the judaizing Christians persecuted. By their *condemning the just*, understand how they proceeded against them under a pretence and colour of the law; before they would actually kill, they pretended legally to condemn. Learn thence, That God takes notice not only of the open violences offered to his people, but also of all the injuries done unto them under the form of a legal procedure; it is a mighty provocation when public authority, which is the defence of innocency, is made the pretence of oppression. It follows, *Ye have killed the just*; this is added to let us know, that oppression will proceed as far as death. Wickedness knoweth no bounds; good men are oft-times arraigned, condemned, and killed; they fall a sacrifice to the rage of their persecutors and oppressors. It is added, *He doth not resist you*: which, if applied to Christ, points at his meekness, he was slain without resistance; he came to suffer, therefore would not resist. If applied to suffering Christians, it points at their weakness and inability to make resistance, as well as their meekness and patience under sufferings: *Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you.*

7 Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. **8** Be ye

also patient; *establish your hearts*; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Observe here, 1. The duty exhorted to, *patience*: *Be patient, brethren*. Patience is a sense of afflictions without murmuring, and of injuries without revenge. It is the duty of Christians to be patient under their sufferings, though they be long and sharp. Observe, 2. The argument to enforce this duty, *The coming of the Lord draweth nigh*. This may be understood of Christ's particular coming to judge his murderers at Jerusalem, which was then at hand, or of his general coming to judge the world at the last day. As if our apostle had said, "Have a little patience, and when your Lord cometh he will put a period to all your afflictions; with desire long for his coming, and yet with patience wait for it." Observe, 3. A pattern of patience, propounded in the husbandman, he waiteth, and waiteth long for the time of harvest; and in order thereto, for the former and latter rain, to prepare the corn for the day of a joyful harvest. Now, in imitation of the husbandman, the patient Christian thus argues with himself: "If the husbandman waits with patience for the coming of the harvest, shall not I wait with perseverance for the coming of my Lord! The approach of harvest is precious to him, and shall not the appearance of Christ be so to me! Shall he endure so much for a little corn, and not I much more for an heavenly kingdom?" Observe, 4. The direction given in order to the obtaining of this patience and long suffering, *establish your hearts*: that is, in a firm expectation of Christ's coming, believe that he will come certainly, and may come suddenly, and sooner perhaps than you may apprehend. Learn hence, That it is the duty of Christians, in and under their afflictions, to stablish their hearts in a firm belief of the coming and appearance of Christ, to put a final period to all their sufferings, and to reward their victorious faith and patience: *Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned; behold, the Judge standeth before the door.

Observe here, 1. A prohibition, *Grudge not one against another*; that is, do not murmur or repine, groan or grieve, as impatient men use to do under their pressure; complain not of God, because the time of your deliverance is delayed. Thirst not after revenge against your persecutors, and

envy not those who are exercised with fewer troubles than yourselves; *Grudge not.* Observe, 2. The enforcement of this prohibition from the danger of the fact, *Lest ye be condemned.* As if he had said, "Impatience and discontent, envy and distrust, will expose you to greater miseries than you complain of; your sufferings here are but for your probation, but your grudging and repining will be your condemnation. Observe, 3. The anticipation or forestalling of an objection, which some might make:

"What! must we suffer, and may we not complain! Must we by tamely bearing many affronts, invite more, and revenge none!" Yes, says the apostle, be patient, and commit your cause to him that judgeth righteously: for, *behold, the Judge standeth before the door.* Where note, 1. A judge, the supreme and universal judge, Jesus Christ, who was here judged by his creatures, but is now coming to judge his judges. 2. His posture, *He standeth*; which is the judge's posture when he executes judgment. St. Stephen saw Christ standing, *Acts vii. 56*, at God's right hand; not as an advocate to plead his cause, (Christ is said to sit at God's right hand when he does that,) but he stood now as a judge, to take speedy vengeance on St. Stephen's murderers for that bloody act. Note, 3. The place where the judge standeth, *Before the door*; that is, he is coming to judgment, and he is just at hand: he has put on his robes, and is ascending his tribunal. Observe lastly, The note of attention, *Behold!* this ushers in the whole, *Behold, the Judge standeth at the door.* Learn hence, That the consideration of Christ's near approach to judgment should awe the consciences of men, and mould their conversations into a dutiful compliance with divine commands.

10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

Here the apostle exhorts suffering Christians to patience, by the example of the Old-Testament saints, who were exceeding dear to God, employed in special services for God, yet exercised with long and sharp afflictions for him. Now, their nature was as tender and as frail as ours, and we have the same blessed Spirit to comfort and assist us with them. Note thence, 1. That the examples of excellent persons who have gone in the thorny path of affliction before us, and beaten it for us, are of excellent use to suppress our fears, to support our spirits under all our conflicts, and to rouse our courage in all our encounters. Note, 3. That it is our great duty to eye the

encouraging examples of those that have trod the path of sufferings before us, and strive to imitate and follow such worthy patterns. The first sufferers had the hardest task; strange and untried torments are most terrible; they knew not the strength of their enemy which they were to engage; but we fight with an enemy which has been often beaten and triumphed over by our brethren that went before us; certainly we that live in these last times have the best helps that ever any had to subdue our fears; *Take* we then the *prophets*, and primitive saints, for an example both of grievous sufferings and of great patience.

11 Behold, we count them happy which endure.—

That is, "All persons do judge and pronounce those that have suffered death for righteousness' sake, to be in a very happy condition; though they live persecuted, yet they die sainted. Living saints are an eyesore; by the strictness of their lives, and the severity of their reproofs, they torment a wicked world; but dead saints do not stand in the way of their lusts, they will therefore have a good word for the dead saints, whilst they hate and persecute the living; *Behold, we count them happy which endure.*

—Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

That is, "Ye have heard how eminent Job was, both for his sufferings and his patience, and you have seen, (it is set before your eyes in his story,) what an end the Lord made with him, giving him double in this world for what he lost; therefore, though you may be losers for God, yet fear not that you shall be losers by him." Learn hence, 1. That it is good and useful in our afflictions, to propound Job's pattern and example to our own imitation. He was famous for his sufferings, and as famous for his patience. Do you suffer various kinds of affliction? do you suffer in your body, in your spirit, in your nearest relations, in your dearest of earthly comforts? and under all these do you suffer the heaviest censures of hypocrisy? It is but Job's portion, and if you compare notes, not half of his condition neither. So for his patience, let us propound that for our pattern too, and take this encouragement to do it, namely, that though Job discovered much impatience, cursing the day of his birth, &c. yet that is not here mentioned, but mercifully pitied and pardoned, and graciously overlooked. Where the heart is upright with God, infirmities are no

mentioned by him. Learn, 2. That our afflictions ought not so much to be considered in their nature and beginning, as in their issue and end: *You have seen the end of the Lord.* God gives always a gracious end and glorious end to the afflictions of his people, and sometimes a temporal end also. Job had all these: let us under the rod wait upon God with Job's patience, and he will give us Job's end. Learn, 3. What an affectionate regard God bears to his children in and under all their heavy sufferings; he is full of bowels, as the word signifies, truly compassionate, *very pitiful, and of tender mercy.* As he has pardon for their sins, so he has pity for their afflictions; he is pitiful as well as merciful, yea, very pitiful, and of tender mercy. Observe, lastly, That the book of Job is a real history, not a parable. There was such a man as Job, how else could his patience be propounded as a pattern? And whence is it that we find him numbered with Noah and Daniel? *Ezek. xiv. 14.* As they were real persons, and truly prevalent in prayer, so was he, *Job xlii. 10.*

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not: neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay: lest ye fall into condemnation.

Observe, That an oath here is not absolutely forbidden, but restrained; *Above all things, my brethren.* Note, with what vehemency and earnestness the apostle speaks, *Swear not*, that is, swear not vainly and rashly, swear not lightly and profanely, swear not unduly by any of the creatures, (but by the Creator only,) which was a sin that the Jews were dreadfully guilty of: *But let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay;* accustom yourselves to a true simplicity and plainness of speech, in affirming or denying, letting oaths alone, *lest ye fall into condemnation;* that is, plainly, into the condemnation of hell. Learn hence, 1. That rash and vain swearing, or profane oaths, are an high abuse of the dreadful name of God, and a mighty provocation to him. Verily there is no sin that doth more weary the patience of God, because there is no sin that doth more banish the fear of God out of their hearts.—Learn, 2. That the great end of speech being to communicate the sense of our minds to each other, we ought to use such plainness and simplicity in speaking, that we may believe one another without oaths, or more solemn religious asseruations. But yet, 3. That to take an oath upon a solemn occasion,

when lawfully called thereunto, is a Christian and necessary duty.

13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.—

Here observe, 1. That affliction is a praying season. Prayer is a duty never out of season, but never more in season than in and under affliction. Observe, 2. That though the time of affliction be a special time when a saint prayeth, yet it is not the only time: he prays at all times, because he loves to pray; he prays then, because he especially stands then in need of prayer. A carnal heart has no mind to the duty; he visits not God unless God visits him; but a good man prays continually, prays without ceasing, in health and sickness, in poverty and want; when the candle of the Lord shines about his tabernacle, as well as when he walketh through darkness.

—Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

He that prays, makes music in the ears of God: he that sings psalms performs a duty suitable to his condition. Several conditions require several duties, and all duties are to be performed suitably to our several conditions. Singing is proper to a prosperous state; both to sing God's praises, and to sing to his praise; prayer is proper to an afflicted condition; it is our best remedy, because it leads us to God our best refuge. Therefore if any be afflicted, let him pray to God to alleviate and sanctify his affliction. *Is any merry, let him sing psalms* of praise to that God who hath given him this cheerfulness of spirit.

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church: and let them pray over him.—

Some observe, 1. That St. James doth not say, "Is any man sick? let him pray;" but let him send for others to pray with and for him. Plainly supposing, that the sick man is very unfit to pray himself, or to pray for himself; in other afflictions, let him pray, but in sickness let others pray for him, he having enough to do to grapple with his grief, and to conflict with his affliction; a diseased body unfits the mind for holy duties. Yet observe, 2. It is one thing to want a heart in sickness to pray for ourselves, and another thing to want ability to pray for ourselves. Many desire the prayers of others in sickness, who want hearts to pray for themselves in health. This is a sad symptom that the soul is as sick, yea more dangerously sick, than the body. Add to this, That the prayers of others are very rarely beneficial to us, un-

less we pray, or have a desire to pray, for ourselves. Observe, 3. The sick man's duty, not only to desire prayer, but to send to the elders of the church to pray for him, and with him. *Quest.* But if the sick neglect to send, may the minister neglect to go, if he knows of the sickness? Doubtless we ought to go if we know of it, whether they send or not, for they want our prayers and our help most when they desire it least; and by refusing to go, we may lose the last, and perhaps the best, opportunity of doing good unto them. If our people, through stupidity and insensibleness, omit their duty in sending for us, God forbid that either through pride or sluggishness we should neglect our duty in going to them: too, too often we never hear our people are sick, till the bell tells us they are dead. If therefore by any means we gain the knowledge of their condition, let us apply ourselves with all our might to their consciences, lest God be more angry with us for not going to them, than with them for not sending for us; imitating our Lord, who was found of them that sought him not.

—Anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Some make this anointing with oil to be a medicinal practice among the Jews, and that they administer it physically. But why then must the elders administer it? the physician might have done it as well as they. True, but the elders are sent for, that they applying this corporal remedy, might join with it spiritual physic, or prayer, good admonition, and comfort. As if a sick person should send for the minister at his taking of physic, that he might then pray with him, counsel, and comfort him. Others make this anointing with oil a religious act. Christ empowered his apostles to work miracles, and amongst others, they had the gift of healing the sick, whom they anointed in the name of the Lord, or by the authority of the Lord; but the gospel being sufficiently confirmed, this gift of healing is ceased, and therewith the rite of anointing: therefore the church of Rome keep up an idle ceremony in anointing the sick, unless they had a miraculous power to heal the sick. To keep up the rite, unless they could produce the effect, to pretend to the anointing, without the power of healing, is a mere piece of pagantry: besides, they anoint those that are given over for dead, and the apostle's anointing was for the benefit of the living, as appears by the following verse:

15 And the prayer of faith shall

save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up;—

Here our apostle shows the good effects of this anointing and praying; yet note, that he ascribes the sick man's recovery, not to the oil, but to the prayer: *The prayer of faith shall save the sick.* The moral means is taken notice of before the ritual and ceremonial: *The prayer of faith shall save the sick.* There was required to the miracle, faith, both in the elder, and in the sick person, to save, that is, to recover the sick; yet mark, it is said, *the Lord shall raise him up*, to note that the efficacy of faith lies in the object of faith: it is not faith properly, but God called upon in faith, that saveth the sick; the efficacy of faith is not from its own merit, but from God's power and grace.

—And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

If he have committed sins; Why, is there any question to be made of that. No; but if he has committed such sins as brought this sickness upon him, they shall be forgiven him, upon this prayer of faith; if any special or particular sin has drawn down this disease upon him, it shall be remitted, and the disease removed; where the sickness is by way of chastisement, the healing is a testimony of God's forgiveness. Learn hence, How absurd is the Popish sacrament of *extreme unction*; how can they gather a perpetual ordinance from an action that was extraordinary and miraculous, and long since ceased! or apply a sacrament to dying persons, from a rite used upon persons who were not to die, but to be raised from sickness? Or how can they promise to him forgiveness of sins, to whom they cannot promise that recovery which was the token of it!

16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.—

Note here, 1. That there is a time and season when it is our duty to confess our sins, not only to God, but to one another, to a pious and prudent minister, to an injured and wronged neighbour, to those that have been tempted by us, and have consented with us in sinning. Note, 2. How absurdly the Papists ground their practice of auricular confession upon this text,—here is not one word spoken of a priest, nor of our confessing to him; and if so, the text proves it the priest's duty to confess to the people, as much as the people's to confess to the priest, for the duty required is mutual, *Confess one to another;*

accordingly the words are generally understood of confessing private injuries one to another; that the sick person must reconcile himself to his neighbour as well as to God, that he may recover: for so it follows, *Pray for one another, that ye may be healed*; intimating that it is the duty of Christians to confess their miscarriages and private injuries one to another, and by their prayers to succour, help, and relieve each other; it is the duty of the strong to pray for the weak, and the strong may be strengthened by the prayers of the weak.

—The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Observe here, 1. The qualification of that prayer, which at that time was effectual for the recovery of the sick person in a miraculous manner, it may be rendered an inspired prayer; as they that were moved by the impulses of the Holy Spirit, were called *Εκπνευστοι*, in a good sense; the phrase properly signifies a prayer inwardly wrought and excited, and implies the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit, and the force and vehemency of a Christian's spirit and affection exerted and put forth in the duty; in-wrought prayer, or prayer that works in and upon our own hearts, has a mighty prevalency with God. Observe, 2. The qualification of the person praying, *a righteous man*; not legally righteous, one in a state of sinless perfection, but a person justified by faith, and whose faith is fruitful in good works. Observe, 3. The prevalency and efficacy of such a person's prayer, *It availeth much*: he doth not say how much, that is better experienced than expressed; it availeth much for ourselves, sometimes more for others than for ourselves. Note, That the fervent prayers and intercessions of the righteous have a mighty prevalency with God, both for themselves and others.

17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

Our apostle in these words proves the general proposition he had laid down, that the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, by a particular instance, the example of Elias, who seemed to carry the keys of heaven at his girdle, to shut and open heaven at his pleasure, 1 Kings xvii. 1. *As the Lord liveth, there shall not be*

dew nor rain, but according to my word; the apostle tells us what word this was, namely, a word of prayer, and not a word of command: *Elias prayed, and the heaven gave rain*. He *prayed in prayer*, so the original, that is, he prayed with faith and fervency, according to the will of God revealed to him; and though he was a man subject to the common infirmities of human nature with ourselves, yet his passions did not hinder the prevalency of his prayers: nothing has wrought such wonderful effects in the world as prayer; it made the sun stand still in heaven, *Josh. x. 12, 13*. it brought fire out of heaven, *1 Kings i. 10*. and here it shut up the windows of heaven, that it rained not for the space of three years and six months: it has a divine kind of omnipotency in it.

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Our apostle concludes this epistle with an exhortation to the duty of fraternal correction and Christian admonition. "If," says he, "any one among you, who hath made an outward profession of Christianity, shall, for fear of persecution, or otherwise, turn aside from the rule of the gospel, whether in matters of faith or practice, such a person, either minister or private Christian, as shall be instrumental, by prayer, reproof, or counsel, to recover him out of that wandering and backsliding condition, shall have the honour to *save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins*; that is, he shall be a means of bringing him to a sight of his sins, and to seek pardon for them, which is the only true and happy way of hiding and of covering them. Learn hence, 1. It is not sufficient that every one takes care of his own soul, but he must also watch over the souls of others; there is no brother so mean in the Christian church, but the care of his salvation belongeth to all in the Christian communion. Learn, 2. What great honour God puts upon the creature, in calling him a saviour to a restored and converted brother, he *shall save a soul from death*; but when God puts the glory of his own work upon the head of the creature, what cause has he to lay the crown of his excellency at the foot of God! when the honour of the supreme cause is put upon the instrument, the instrument ought to ascribe all the efficacy and efficiency to the first cause, saying, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be the praise*. Amen.

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL

OF

S T. P E T E R.

The writer of this and the following Epistle was St. Peter, who styles himself an apostle of Jesus Christ, not the universal bishop and head of the church; no where do we find this holy and humble apostle assuming, though we often find the apostate church of Rome giving him, an uncontrollable monarchy and sovereign dominion over the whole church of Christ, and over the apostles themselves, and their successors: and accordingly to interpret those words of our Saviour to St. Peter, St. John xxi. *Paase oves, "feed my sheep,"* in such a rampant sense as they have done, could never with any confidence have been offered to the reason of mankind, had not these men subdued their reason to their interest, and subjected both to an implicit faith and blind obedience. St. Peter, being the apostle of the circumcision, writes this Epistle to the believing Jews and proselyted Gentiles, who were of the dispersion, scattered abroad in divers countries, of whom he had an especial charge, and of whose conversion he had been a principal instrument.

The design of the Epistle is to confirm them in the Christian religion, to encourage them to constancy under the sharpest persecutions and fiery trials for the same, and to excite them to the practice of particular duties incumbent upon them in every capacity and relation in which they stood, beautifying and adorning their holy profession by an holy and becoming conversation. And accordingly thus he writes unto them:

CHAP. I.

PETER, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Observe here, 1. The penman of this epistle described by his name, *Peter*: by his office, *an Apostle*; by the author of his office, *Jesus Christ*. This name *Peter* was given him by our Saviour, and signifieth a *stone*, a *rock*, probably for his confession and acknowledgment of Christ, the rock upon whom the Christian church was built; his call to the office, first of a disciple, and then of an apostle, was from Christ himself. It is a singular support to the ministers of the gospel of Christ, under all their discouragements, to consider whose officers they are, and from

whom they have both their mission and their message, their authority and their abilities, for the sacred function: *Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ*. Observe, 2. The persons to whom the epistle is directed, to the strangers scattered abroad in *Pontus, Galatia, &c.* that is, to such of the converted Jews and proselyted Gentiles as were dispersed into several countries, exiled and banished from house and home, for the sake of Christ and his holy religion, which they made a faithful profession of. Learn hence, That a state of exile and banishment from outward comforts and privileges, has been, and may be, the lot and portion of a people that are exceeding dear to Almighty God: *To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia*. Observe, 3. How he comforts them in this their persecuted condition, by declaring to them the great things which God had done for them in their *election, vocation, and sanctification*; assuring them that God had chosen them out of the world, according to his foreknowledge and unsearchable counsel, and effectually called them to the participation of his grace, sanctifying them by his Spirit that they

should obey the truth, and by faith be sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and thereby be brought into a state of perfect peace and reconciliation with God. Learn hence, 1. That God has certainly chosen some to happiness as the end, are also chosen to holiness as the mean: *Elect through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience.* Sanctification is the fruit of our election, and obedience the end of our sanctification. Learn, 3. That sanctification and justification always accompany one another; here is sanctification and sprinkling with the blood of Christ joined together: where note, Christ, as mediator, has blood, his blood was shed, his blood that was shed must be sprinkled, and by faith applied; and we can never discern our interest in the blood of Christ, till we are sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, and our hearts and lives wrought unto obedience. Justification and sanctification, though distinct in their nature, yet are inseparable in their subject. Observe, lastly, The salutation here sent to these dispersed saints, *Grace and peace be multiplied.* Where note, 1. The connexion, *grace and peace.* 2. The order, first grace, and then peace. 3. The option, *be multiplied.* The blessings prayed for, are the choicest, the sweetest, and the best of blessings, *grace and peace*: together with the augmentation and abundant increase of both, *Grace and peace be multiplied.* Learn, That there is nothing that the ministers of Christ do more passionately desire and more earnestly endeavour, than to see their people brought into, and preserved in, a state of favour and peace with God, and enjoying a multiplied increase of all spiritual and temporal blessings from him.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle breaks forth into gratulation and thankfulness to God, for those special blessings, which, by his ministry, were conferred upon these converted Christians, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Blessing and praise are due to God for the least mercies received from God, because we are less than the least, much more for spiritual and eternal blessings, which are the greatest mercies that either God can

give, or we receive. Observe, 2. The special mercy which he thus solemnly blesses, and gives thanks to God for, namely, their regeneration: for *begetting them to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, &c. according to his abundant mercy.* Where note, 1. The benefit declared, that they were begotten again to an hope of salvation: by means of sin, all influences of grace were suspended, and all hopes of salvation were cut off. Christ's interposure for us makes our condition hopeful, and the fallen angels hopeless. Note, 2. The qualification of that hope which Christians are begotten to; it is a *lively hope*, in opposition to a dead hope, and to a languid and languishing hope: the Christian's hope is an effectual hope, which proceeds from faith and promotes holiness. A *lively hope* is an hope that makes us lively, joyful, and comfortable in our lives; an hope that puts life into us. Note, 3. The means whereby we are begotten to this hope, and that is, *by the resurrection of Christ from the dead*; not by the bare act of his resurrection, but by the virtue and power of it, we are raised to a spiritual life by it, and our hopes of eternal life are thereby strengthened and confirmed. The justification of our persons, the regeneration of our natures, the resurrection of our bodies, the glorification of our souls and bodies, are singular fruits and benefits of Christ's resurrection. Well might the apostle then say, *that we are begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* Note, 4. The moving and impulsive cause from which regeneration, and all other spiritual blessings, do proceed and flow; the mercy and goodness of God, *According to his abundant mercy he hath begotten us again.* In the matters of salvation nothing is owing to our merit; for demerit cannot merit, but all is due to divine goodness, and undeserved mercy; that is the fountal cause of all our favours. Note, 5. The nature of that happiness which believers are begotten to a lively hope and expectation of; it is here styled *an inheritance.* Heaven is an inheritance, and as such it is given to children, to all God's children, to none but his children: it is an inheritance dearly purchased, yet freely given: Christ is the sole purchaser of it; no joint-purchasers with him; the saints are called joint-heirs with Christ, but never joint-purchasers; yet remember, that though we cannot purchase this inheritance in a way of merit, we may forfeit it by our demerit, and provoke our heavenly Father to disinherit us. Note, 6. The properties and excellences of this inheritance which believers are raised by Christ

to the expectation of: it is an inheritance *incorruptible*; an enduring possession; not subject to decay, having nothing in it that can corrupt it, or corrupt us in the enjoyment of it. *Undefiled*, heaven is an holy habitation; the holiness of heaven is the most considerable part of its happiness; sinners therefore that despise holiness, despise the richest jewel in the crown of glory. *It fadeth not away*, it withereth not; glory is a flower which will eternally retain its freshness and verdure. *Reserved in the heavens for us*; heaven is the country where the saints' inheritance lies; here it is reserved or laid up safe, by the purpose and pleasure of God, by the purchase, possession, and intercession of Christ; and to be able to say, *For us*, and be particularly assured of heaven, is a special comfort.

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time:

Here our apostle seems to pre-occupate and prevent an objection. Some might say, "Though the saints' inheritance be safe in heaven, yet they are in danger here on earth." Be it so, as if our apostle had said, yet they are and shall be kept by God's power, and their own faith, to eternal salvation. Note here, 1. *We are kept*; it implies we are in danger, in great danger of missing salvation, by reason of the number, power, and policy, of our spiritual enemies, corruption and sin within, the devil and the world without; but we are kept as in a garrison; so the word signifies: saints are preserved like besieged cities; the general whom they fight under, and hold out for, preserves them, by sending in fresh recruits, supplies from the Holy Spirit, and by cutting off such succours as our lusts and spiritual enemies would send forth against us, so that they starve, and shall not vanquish us, but we them. *We are kept*; eternal thanks for such a keeper! Note, 2. What it is believers are kept and preserved to, namely, *salvation*: he does not say they are or shall be kept from trouble and affliction; that their fingers shall not ache in this world: he has made no such promise, and we must expect no such preservation, but the contrary: *In the world ye shall have tribulation*, says Christ, the captain of our salvation, *John xvi*. But safety and rest, happiness and ease, shall be our portion in the coming world. Note, 3. The means by which we are thus kept unto salvation. 1. On God's part, *almighty power*. If left one moment to ourselves, we become a prey

to every temptation. How did the devil baffle and befoul Adam in innocence, when he had his wits about him, by being left in the hand of his own counsels! Lord, in a worst hand thou canst not leave us than our own! 2. On our part we are kept through faith. Our own endeavour must accompany God's power, in order to our preservation. *We are kept by the power of God through faith*; by both jointly, by neither singly. God's power will not keep us without our care, neither can our care secure us without the help of his power. We and our faith must be kept by the power of God; what God does for us, he does by us; he requires the use of our faculties, and the concurrence of our own endeavours, in order to our salvation. Note, 4. The time when the saints' complete salvation shall be revealed to them, and they have the full and final fruition of that;—*Ready to be revealed in the last time*. Mark, the saints' salvation in heaven is a mystery, an hidden mystery, not yet revealed; revealed only to saints on earth by faith, to saints in heaven by sight; but the full revelation is not to be expected and enjoyed by glorified saints before the day of judgment, called here *the last time*: *Ready to be revealed in the last time*. Our apostle told us, verse 4. it was reserved in heaven for us, kept safe for us, but kept close in heaven: it is an inestimably rich treasure; they that are heirs of it on earth, yea, they that are possessed of it in heaven, do not as yet fully understand and know the transcendency of it, but it shall be revealed to them at the last day.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Wherein ye greatly rejoice: That is, in the belief and expectation of which glorious and incorruptible inheritance in heaven, ye now joy and rejoice here on earth; plainly intimating, that a believer may be assured of his title to the glorious inheritance above, and both may and ought to rejoice in it abundantly below. Observe, farther, By what way and method God brings his people to heaven, it is by *heaviness*, by affliction, yea, by *manifest* afflictions. As if he had said, "you that are the present candidates for heaven, the heirs of salva-

tion, must not think yourselves past the rod and the scurfa; and that you are to expect nothing but comfort, and to do nothing but rejoice in the hopes of your salvation. But I tell you, you may have need of heaviness before you get to heaven, and of manifold temptations for the mortifying your corruptions, before you enter upon an inheritance incorruptible." Observe, 3. The supposition made concerning the necessity of a believer's afflictions: *If need be*. Intimating, 1. That we should never feel any affliction from the hand of God, never be in heaviness, if there were not need. And, 2. That there is need that the holiest in this world should sometimes be made heavy, and that heaviness should be upon them for a season. We should always have calms and fair weather, never any storms and tempests from God, did not our needs call for it. As we need our daily bread, so verily do we need a daily rod, both the rod of God's mouth to admonish and reprove us, and the rod of his hand to chasten and correct us: *Ye are in heaviness for a season, if need be, through manifold temptations*. Hence learn, That the trials and afflictions which God exercises his children with, are many, yet they never feel them but when they need them, and then only for a season. As the coldness of the winter kills the weeds in our grounds, so the cold blasts of affliction (under the mortifying influences of the Holy Spirit) kill our corruptions in our souls. Perpetual shinings and fair seasons are reserved for heaven: cold blasts and nipping frosts are needful and useful here on earth: *Ye are in heaviness for a season, if need be*. Learn farther, That as God doth not afflict us but when there is need, so he will not afflict us more than there is need. *Ye are in heaviness for a season*: we shall not be afflicted an hour longer, nor shall our cross be a drachm or a grain heavier, than God thinks needful. Observe, 4. The happy effect and fruit of the saints' manifold temptations: they all work for their advantage; they receive good and not hurt by them; no more hurt than the gold receives by the fire. *That the trial of your faith*: that is, that your tried faith, being more precious than gold. Faith is more precious than gold, because more pure, more durable, especially when purified in the furnace of affliction. A good man is no loser, but a great gainer, by being tried. He, who before had much dross in him, comes out of the furnace as gold, without losing any thing either of its weight or worth; nothing is consumed but the dross and rubbish of his corruptions. O happy consumption! Grace is not only

grace still, but more gracious, yea, glorious, after trial. *That the trial of your faith being much more precious than that of gold that perisheth*. Observe, lastly, That faith must be tried on earth, before it be crowned in heaven; and after it is tried, it shall certainly be crowned, and found unto praise, honour, and glory, at the appearance of Jesus Christ. Learn hence, That the trial of a Christian's faith in their manifold afflictions and temptations now, will bring abundance of honour and glory to God in the day of Christ; yea, not only to God, but to ourselves. *Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment now, will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory then*.

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

In these words our apostle commendeth the faith and love of those Jews to whom he wrote; that although they had never seen Christ in the flesh as others did, yet they did truly love him, and their faith caused them to triumph and rejoice in him. Learn hence, That it is the property and practice of a believer to love an unseen Saviour, and to rejoice in him, and in the hopes of eternal life by him. Inference, If such as never saw Christ but with a believing eye, do yet love him superlatively, and rejoice in him unspeakably, how will they love him and rejoice in him, who shall see him with a glorified eye, and behold him face to face!

9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. 10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. 11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

Observe here, 1. The end, that is, the reward, of a Christian's faith; it is the salvation of his soul; of his soul eminently, but

not exclusively, of body and soul both. The complete salvation of soul and body both with Christ in heaven, shall be the end and reward of the believer's faith. Observe, 2. The diligent search into, and enquiry after, the nature of this salvation, which was made by the prophets of the Old Testament: *Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently*; that is, by prayer, meditation, and study, they searched after the farther and clearer knowledge of this great salvation, and the kingdom of the Messiah, when should be the time of his sufferings and humiliation, which were to precede his glory and exaltation. Observe, 3. The success of this their enquiry and search: they were answered by God, and received this revelation from him, that they themselves were not the men that should see the Messiah, and his special kingdom; and that the things which they prophesied of, were not to be fulfilled in their own times, but in after-times; and accordingly the things foretold by the prophets, he assures them, were clearly manifested to them by the apostles, who were endowed with an extraordinary measure of the Holy Spirit, sent down upon them at the day of Pentecost: *Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things now reported unto you.* Observe, lastly, The sublimity and transcendent excellency of those gospel mysteries which are now revealed; they are so ravishing and transporting, that the holy angels desire to pry into them: *Which things the angels desire to look into.* Learn thence, That the glorious mystery of man's redemption and salvation, by the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, is an object worthy of the admiration and contemplation of the adoring angels. They admire the person of the Redeemer, they admire the author and contriver of the work of redemption, they admire the subjects redeemed, they admire the manner and method of our redemption, they admire the finally glorious state which the redeemed are brought into, and possessed of, and they pry into these things, as the cherubims looked upon the ark, with a curious and accurate inspection, with an earnest and affectionate inspection; they holily admire the wisdom of this glorious contrivance, though even their raised and enlarged capacities can never be able fully to comprehend it.

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ:

Our apostle having laid before them their high and glorious privileges in the foregoing verses, comes now to excite them to the practice of several needful and important duties in this and the following verses. The first of which is vigilance and watchfulness, preparation and readiness of mind: *Gird up the loins of your mind*: an allusion both to runners and waiters; to such as run in a race, and to such as wait upon their master; who both gird up their clothes (which in those eastern countries they wear down to their heels) that they might not hinder or trouble them, either in running or waiting. Next, to be sober, and keep up their hope steadfastly and perseveringly to the end, for that grace and salvation, for that perfection in holiness and glory, which God will certainly give us at the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ. Here note, 1. The grace and duty which they are exhorted to be found in the exercise of, and that is, *hope*; to persevere in hope unto the end. That is a divine grace, and necessary duty, whereby a believer for Christ's sake expects and waits for all the great and good things which God has promised, but the Christian at present not received. Note, 2. The direction given in order to the exercise of this grace and duty of hope, *Gird up the loins of your mind.* Habits of grace are altogether unprofitable to us, without they be excited by us, and stirred up in us. When we pray, when we hear, we must gird up our loins in praying and hearing; or in the prophet's phrase, *Stir up yourselves to take hold on God.* A man upon his sick bed must gird up the loins of his mind to bear his affliction, else he will not profit by it nor answer the end of God in it. No grace can be exercised, no duty can be performed, by a soul ungirded: *Gird up the loins of your mind, that ye may hope, &c.*

14 As obedient children not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

The next duty he exhorts them to, is to answer the engagements which their adoption laid them under; they were now the children of God, and as such must, 1. Be obedient to their heavenly Father, walking in the path of his commandments, and no longer according to the former lusts, which they were captivated by, and enslaved unto in the time of their ignorance, when they knew not God. And, 2. They must, imi-

tate their heavenly Father in the love and practice of universal holiness: *As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy.* Observe, 1. Christians must make God the pattern of their holiness, and be holy as God is holy, though not as holy as God is; the command obliges to a conformity, not to an equality; as God is really holy, positively holy, strictly and exactly holy, universally holy, unchangeably holy, so must we labour to be holy both towards God and man, which is to be *holy in all manner of conversation.* Observe, 2. Christians are here required not only to make God the pattern of their holiness, but the motive of their holiness; *Be ye holy, for I am holy.* Seeing our God is a holy God, therefore we that are his people must be holy also. Our apostle here represents the holiness of God both as a rule and as a motive of that holiness which should be acted by us. And whereas the apostles says, *It is written Be ye holy;* it plainly intimates, that God has in all former ages obliged all persons, who pretended any relation to him as his children, to be holy as he is holy; though not as to equality, yet as to imitation; though not in measure and degree, yet in quality and kind. God is the original of all holiness, and the first man he created was after his own likeness; and every one that is renewed, is said to be *created after God in righteousness and true holiness.* What is godliness, but god-likeness? and what is holiness, but the conformity of our nature to the holy nature of God, and the conformity of our lives to the will of God?

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear;

If ye call on the Father; that is, If ye call God your Father, and call upon him by worshipping and owning of him, who without any respect of persons, or any regard had to nations, Jew or Gentile, judgeth of every man now, and will judge every man according to his works hereafter, see that you pass the time of your pilgrimage and sojourning in this world in holy and obedient fear. Learn, 1. That such as call God Father ought to walk in obedience before him as his sons; *If ye call on the Father.* Learn, 2. That he whom we call Father, is and will be our Judge, not a short-sighted, but a sharp-sighted, Judge, impartial in judgment, judging all persons according to their works, judging all works as they really are, and not as they outwardly appear to be. Learn, 3. That Christians here in this world are but strangers, and their life

upon earth a pilgrimage, which they are daily passing. Learn, 4. That the whole time of a Christian's pilgrimage ought to be passed in a holy, cautious, reverential and obedient fear of God: *Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you; 21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

Still our apostle is pressing Christians to the love and practice of holiness, and a reverential fear of God, by fresh arguments and motives, particularly from their redemption; saying, that they could not but be sensible that they were redeemed with a very costly price, not with silver and gold, which yet would ransom kings, but by the precious blood of Christ, whom the paschal lamb typified, and who was from eternity fore-ordained to the office of a mediator, though he was not manifested in the flesh till these last days, for the good and benefit of those who by him do believe in God that raised Christ from the dead, and gloriously exalted him at his right hand, upon which account their faith and hope may safely and comfortably rest in God. Note here, 1. The thralldom, bondage, and slavery, of our sinful state before we were redeemed. Note, 2. The impotency and inability of all outward things, be they never so rich, precious, and costly, to redeem and ransom an enslaved sinner. *Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold.* All the gold and silver in the world was no ransom for one soul, nay, the blood of all the creatures in the world offered up in sacrifice to the justice of God, could have been no sufficient compensation. Note, 3. That the redemption of every soul cost no less than the precious blood of the Son of God, that spotless Lamb, who by the sacrifice of his death atoned divine displeasure. Note, 4. That God the Father fore-ordained Jesus Christ his Son to this blessed office of a Redeemer before the foundation of the world, though he was not manifest in the flesh till these

last times. Note, 5. That by Christ the Redeemer we are taught to know God, and to believe in him who raised Christ from the dead. Here observe, How the Socinians wrest and misapply this text, where we are said by Christ to believe in God. Thus they argue, "He by whom we believe in God, is not that God in whom we believe, because the means of faith can never be the object of faith; but Christ is he: the apostle says here, *by whom we believe in God*, therefore Christ is not God."—*Ans.* Christ, considered in his human nature, in which he died, and was raised for us, is he by whom we believe in God, that is, own him to be able to raise us from the dead; but this hinders not his being God according to his divine nature, by which he did actually raise himself from the dead, *John* x. 18.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently*: 23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

The next duty which our apostle exhorts these Christians to, is the duty of brotherly love, to a gracious propensity of heart which a Christian bears for Christ's sake to his neighbours, whereby he wills, and to his power procures, all good for him; a brotherly affection which every true Christian chiefly bears to all his fellow-members in Christ for grace sake. This duty of brotherly love is often urged and enforced by Christ and his apostles. St. Peter here tells them, that seeing, by the power of Christ's Spirit, and obedience of the gospel, they had purified themselves in some measure from pride and self-love, they should now labour to grow in the fervency and sincerity of their love one towards another. And the argument he uses to persuade them to love one another, is drawn from their relation to each other; they are all born again, and born alike; not brethren by corruptible generation only, but begotten of incorruptible seed, the word of God; therefore should they live in love together, as children of the same Father. Note here, The commendation given to the word of God, not to any inward word infused, but the outward word preached, it is styled *incorruptible seed*; from whence it follows, that in the ministry of the word is the ordinary means of the new birth, and the instrumental cause of our regeneration: *Being born again not of corruptible*

seed, but of incorruptible, the word of God. Note farther, That such as are born of this incorruptible seed, ought to bear an incorruptible love to each other, as an evidence of their incorruptible and gracious nature: *See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*

24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

Our apostle closes the chapter, by setting before them the excellency of their spiritual regenerate state, compared with all other excellences and endowments whatsoever: *All flesh*, that is, flesh with all its glory, is a fading, dying, perishing thing; it flags like the grass, and fades like the flower. There are three excellences in a flower: sweetness, which affects the smell; beauty, that affects the eye; softness and smoothness, which affect the touch; all these our apostle passes over, and speaks of the flower, not as flourishing, but as withering; not as springing up, but as falling away. *The grass withereth the flower falleth away.* Learn hence, That man, when most flourishing, with all the ornaments of wit and wealth, beauty and honour, is fading, and near to withering.—Thus David describes them, *Psa.* ciii. 15, 16. *As for man, his days are as grass; as the flower of the field so he flourisheth; the wind passeth over it and it is gone.* Though the flower be neither cut nor cropt, yet a breath of wind blasts it, and blows away the beauty of it: *All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.*

25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

That is, the word of God, the mind of Christ, contained in, and revealed by, the gospel, shall abide and last for ever, and never be abrogated; the word of God is everlasting truth, it is so in its nature, and also in its effects upon the regenerate, it abideth for ever, and so doth their estate who are begotten again by it. The word of God is the incorruptible seed, or principle of regeneration: it is called the *word of eternal life*, because it brings those that love and obey it to eternal life, *John* vi. 68. Observe lastly, That the same word of God is now preached unto us which was so highly commended by the prophets, apostles, and by Christ himself: *This is that word, the same word, which by the gospel is preached unto you.*

CHAP. II.

Our apostle having, in the former chapter, made mention of their regeneration, or new birth, and taken notice of the instrumental cause of it, namely, the word of God, he comes, in the beginning of this chapter, to give several directions for our profitable hearing and receiving of the same; which having compared to milk, he shows how and after what manner, it should be desired, tasted, and digested, by us, that we may grow thereby. And accordingly he thus bespeaks us:

WHEREFORE laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakingings.

Here we are first directed what to lay aside, in order to our fruitful and profitable entertainment of the word of God, namely, these five sins, *malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil-speaking*. Whence note in general, That if any sin, much more if many sins, be kept close and lie dormant within us, they will certainly hinder the efficacy of the word upon us. As the foulness of the stomach hinders the natural digestion; till it be purged out, nothing can nourish within; in like manner, our apostle here advises to purge out these pestilent lusts of malice and guile, of hypocrisy and envy, &c., before we hear the word of God, as ever we expect to be nourished with it, and grow thereby. As sin hinders good from coming to us, so it hinders the word from working good in us; particularly *malice*, or inveterate anger harboured in the heart; *guile*, or deceit in words or actions; *hypocrisy*, or an appearance of friendship, when the heart is otherwise affected; *envy*, or grieving at another's good; and *evil-speaking* of all kinds, by lying, by slandering, by back-biting, by detracting, all which are contrary to the great command of love, and obstructive of the word of truth, by which we are born again; but it is observable, particularly concerning *malice*, and *guile*, and *evil-speaking*, that our apostle puts the note of universality to them, *Lay aside all malice, and all guile, and all evil-speaking*; importing, that though some other sins will stick close unto us, yet not a jot of malice or guile should be found in us, at least prevailing in us, of any kind, or in any degree or measure, for one drop of this deadly poison may destroy us; therefore lay aside *all malice, and all guile, and all evil-speaking, &c.*

2 As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

St. Peter having directed us, in our pre-

paration before we come to hear the word, and shown the necessity of laying aside an evil frame of spirit, he now directs us what we are to do when under the word, namely, that there be found with us a spiritual appetite to it, and that we have the same longing desires after it that the child has after the breast: *As new-born babes desire the sincere milk*, so desire you the uncorrupted word of God, *that you may grow thereby*. *Quest.* How does the new-born infant desire its natural nourishment, its mother's milk? *Ans.* These four ways: first, it covets it with vehement and impatient desire, nothing will so well satisfy and please it as the breast, this will quiet it when nothing else will; thus the new-born Christian hungers after the word with a vehement desire, nothing will content and satisfy him, neither gold nor silver, in the absence of the word of God. Secondly, The new-born infant desires the milk from a deep sense of its inward wants, it is pinched with hunger, and parched with thirst, and therefore cries for the breast; so is the Christian sensible of his wants, of his want of knowledge, want of grace; "It is little," says he, "that I know of myself, less of God, least of Jesus Christ: Oh! that by conversing with his word, I might know him more, and serve him better." Thirdly, The infant desires its mother's milk unmixed, as nature has prepared it, without any artificial sweetening of it. Some little regard the wholesomeness of the food, but only admire the dexterity of the cook: they applaud the parts of the preacher, when the word flows from the golden mouth of a celebrated orator: but the new-born Christian desires the sincere milk of the word without any composition of error, and without any such mixture of wit and eloquence as is inconsistent with the gravity and simplicity of the word they hear. Plain truths, without art or varnish, may be conveyed with more warmth and vigour to the conscience, than all the charms of human eloquence from the most fluent and popular tongue; yet always remembering, that though the ministers of God must come in plainness, yet not in rudeness of speech. Fourthly, This desire of the babe after the sincere, unmixed, and uncompounded milk, is always accompanied with endeavour; it hunts for the breast, and is not satisfied that the breast is in its eye, but is impatient till it sucks and draws, that nourishment may be conveyed, and it grow thereby: thus active and operate are the desires and endeavours of a sincere Christian after the word of God: that which was seed to beget, they find food to strengthen, they can never be satisfied

without it, they cannot be satisfied with a little of it.

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

In these words our apostle declares the condition whereon our profiting, growing, and thriving, by the word, doth depend, namely, upon our tasting and experiencing its power, as it is the great instrumental cause both of our spiritual birth and growth. This taste is a spiritual sense of the goodness, power, and efficacy, of the word, in conveying the grace of God unto our souls; in a taste there is sweetness and refreshment, but not fullness and satisfaction. Learn hence, 1. That God doth graciously sweeten the word to such a soul as doth desire sincerely to taste the sweetness of it. 2. That it is but a taste of the sweetness of God and his word which a Christian partakes of in this life; satiety and satisfaction are reserved for another state.

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. 5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Observe here, 1. The denomination, or title, given to Christ, he is styled a *living stone*, and the *chief corner-stone*. 1. A *living stone*, that is, a lively stone, no dead foundation; a life-giving stone, having not only life in himself essentially but communicatively, imparting spiritual life to the whole building. Christ is not only an head of authority, but an head of vital influence to all his members; because he lives, they shall live also. 2. He is styled also the *chief corner-stone*, both in regard of sustentation; the corner-stone supports the whole building, the church's grace, the church's peace, the church's consolation, the church's salvation, are all upheld and maintained by him: and in regard of union, the corner-stone unites, ties, and knits the other stones together, that they should not drop out of the building. Christ alone unites the several stones of the spiritual building to himself, and one to another. And this corner-stone is of God's

own immediate laying, *Behold, I lay in Sion a corner-stone*. Christ was first manifested and offered to the church of the Jews, and then to the rest of the world. Observe, 2. The titles given to believers; 1. They of lively stones are built a spiritual house. Believers are God's temple, dedicated to, and set apart for, his special service, and also enjoying his gracious and special presence. "This is my rest for ever," says God concerning the believer's heart; "here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein." 2. They are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable through Christ. Learn hence, that every Christian in this life is a priest, and ought to offer up himself a sacrifice or oblation unto God. In a sacrifice there was a separation of the thing sacrificed from common use; the beast was separated from the rest of the flock, so must the Christian be set apart from the rest of the world. There was an addition, or dedication, or solemn consecration, of the thing set apart to some holy and special use and purpose: thus the Christian, that presents himself a living sacrifice unto God, does not only separate himself from sin, the world, and the flesh, but does addict and devote himself to God, to serve and please him, to honour and glorify him. Observe, 3. The application which believers make to Christ, in order to their being his spiritual temple, and a royal priesthood. *To whom coming as unto a living stone!* the particle denotes a continual motion, by which the soul gains ground, and gets nearer and nearer to Christ; they are daily coming by faith to him, and gradually advancing in the knowledge of him, and love unto him. Observe, lastly, The sweet fruit and blessed effect of their faith, *Whosoever believeth in him shall not be confounded*: that is, not ashamed, as a person who is disappointed of his hopes and expectations; he shall not be ashamed of his choice, he shall not be ashamed of his profession, he shall never be ashamed of the cause and interest of Christ, which he has espoused, and at all times appeared for; nor of the work and service of Christ, nor of the time and pains expended in their work and service: nor shall he ever be ashamed hereafter that he never was ashamed here.

7 Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious:—

To you belongs the honour of being built a spiritual house upon Christ, the chief corner-stone, which renders him deservedly precious to you, and of a very high estimation with you; whatever mean, low, and undervaluing thoughts, the wick

ed world have of Jesus Christ, yet he is highly esteemed by, and deservedly precious to, every believing soul: he is precious in the several relations he stands in to them, precious in regard of the great things he has done for them, precious in the rich supplies of grace he bestows upon them, and will be eternally precious to them, upon the account of those glorious mansions he has purchased and prepared for them.

—But unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

These words discover the great sin and danger of those who slight and neglect our Lord Jesus Christ, who stumble and take offence at him, either at the meanness of his person, or at the ignominy of his cross, or at the holiness and strictness of his doctrine, or at the freeness of his grace: whatever the occasion of their contempt may be, Christ will prove to them a burdensome stone, a rock against which they will split, to their utter confusion; they will in the close bring ruin upon themselves, as a madman does that dashes himself against a stone. Observe next, How this contempt of Christ has prevailed in the world, ever since his first coming into the world: how did the Jewish rulers, called here the builders, set him at nought, *the stone which the builders disallowed and stumbled at*: that is, the high rulers, whose office and duty it was to build up the church, having power in their hand to do it, but instead of building upon this corner-stone, they stumbled, and took offence at him, and accordingly Christ is called *a stone of stumbling*, and *a rock of offence*: yet this does not imply that Christ was the cause of their stumbling, but only the occasion of it, the object at which they stumbled, without any cause but their own wickedness: for though it be said in the next words, that they were *appointed thereunto*, the meaning is not, that God ordained them to disobedience, for then their obedience had been impossible, and their disobedience had been no sin: but God in his just decree appointed that destruction and eternal perdition should be the punishment of such obstinate and disobedient persons. Learn hence, That Christians have no reason to be offended at the great number of unbelievers that are in the world, and at the sight of Christ's

being rejected by multitudes in the world, it having been long ago foretold in scripture that thus it would be, and consequently it ought to be no occasion of offence that thus it is; *Matth. xxi. 42. Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, is become the head of the corner.*

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: 10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

In these words our apostle acquaints these believing Jews, who were built upon Christ, the foundation-stone, that the same titles did now belong to them in a more excellent manner as Christians, which were formerly given to their ancestors of the Jewish nation by God himself, *Deut. vii. 6, 7.* As the Jews of old were a chosen generation, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that is, they were a people chosen by God before all other people whatsoever, to bear his name, and to bear witness to his truth; they were a people in covenant with him, and so inexpressibly dear unto him, that he that hurt them touched the apple of God's eye: in like manner these Jews, and proselyted Gentiles of the dispersion, who were converted to Christianity, have all the forecited titles belonging to them. *A chosen generation*, by effectual vocation separated from the world to the service of Christ, whose name they bear. *A royal priesthood*, that is, kings and priests; kings to reign with him, and priests to offer spiritual sacrifices to him. *An holy nation*; so are all the professors of Christianity federally holy, and for that reason all the Christian churches called out of the world, and dedicated to the service of Christ, are styled *saints* in all St. Paul's epistles. *A peculiar people*, in covenant with God, purchased by the blood of Christ. Next the apostle declares the end of all these distinguished favours being granted to them; namely, *that they might show forth the virtues*, that is, publish and proclaim the wisdom, power, goodness, and mercy, the righteousness and truth, of God, who had called them out of the darkness of sin, ignorance, and misery, into the marvellous light of knowledge, faith, holiness, and comfort. Lastly, To enhance their thankfulness for all these

distinguishing favours, he puts them in mind of what they were before their conversion to Christianity; in times past *they were not a people*, that is, not a people beloved of God, and in covenant with him; the Lord having given the Jews a bill of divorce, and said to them, *Lo-ammi, Ye are not my people*, Hos. i. 9. but now upon their believing in Christ they were restored to all their church-privileges, by the special mercy and grace of God. Learn hence, That till persons subject themselves to the government of Christ, and become obedient to the gospel, they are in God's account no people: to live without Christ in the world, is a life worse than death. Learn, 2. That when a people are brought near to God by Jesus Christ, and partake of all the rich and invaluable blessings and privileges of the gospel, they are exceedingly indebted for all the rich mercy and free grace of God; *Which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

Observe here, 1. A dehortation, *Abstain from fleshly lusts.* *Quest.* What is here meant by *lusts*? *Ans.* Lust is either habitual or actual: habitual or original lust is the corruption and depravation of the faculties of the soul, an aversion to every thing that is good, and a proneness to all evil: actual lust is original sin put in motion: by fleshly lusts, understand in particular those lusts which are conversant about sensual and fleshly objects. *Quest.* But what is it to abstain from fleshly lusts? *Anno.* It implies a total forbearance of all wilful sins: and at all times there is a great difference between temperance and abstinence; the temperate man eats little, the abstinent nothing at all: every one then that would be accounted a Christian, is to account it his great duty and interest to abstain from all fleshly lusts. Observe, 2. The arguments which our apostle here makes use of to persuade Christians to abstain from all fleshly lusts: the first is implied or included in the compellation, *dearly beloved*, not of the apostle only, or chiefly, but of God, *Ἀγαπητοί*, the same word that Almighty God makes use of in expressing his love to his dear Son: as if he had said, "You that are so dearly beloved of God, look you to it that you abstain from what you know will be displeasing to him." The second argument is drawn from their present state and condition in the world; ye are *strangers and pilgrims* in the world, and therefore should act as

strangers, who are not wont to be over-much affected with objects that they see abroad in their travels, no more should you. The third argument is taken from the peril and danger of these fleshly lusts to our precious souls, they war *against the soul*: that is, they war against the purity of the soul; they war against the dignity of the soul; against the peace of the soul; against the liberty of the soul; yea, against the life of the soul.

12 Having your conversation honest amongst the 'Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

From the apostle's dehortation in the former verse, he comes to an exhortation in this, and the duty exhorted to is strict godliness or holiness in all manner of conversation, *Having your conversation honest*; it is not a single action, but our general course and conversation, that denotes us either good or bad; and the word translated *honest*, signifies fair and amiable, beautiful and adorning, the doing nothing that is unseemly or a blemish either to our person or profession; Christians should not only live free from evil, but as much as may be from the very suspicion of evil: it is added, *among the Gentiles*, that is, amongst the idolatrous nations and people, who had not received the Christian faith; great care must be always taken by the professors of Christianity, that they do nothing which may increase the prejudices of the wicked world against religion and the ways of godliness, but remember that they are our watchful observers and bold censurers; and accordingly endeavour, that, by a regular piety, a strict sobriety, a diffusive and extensive charity, we may render religion venerable to the world, and stop the mouth of slander as much as in us lies, by cutting off occasion from them that seek occasion. Observe farther, The apostle exhorts them to have their conversation *honest amongst the Gentiles*; he doth not say religious, though that be included, but outwardly square, strictly just, and honest; this is that which the world judges us by; vain are all our pretences to piety, if we fail in honesty; we must make conscience of the duties of the second table, as an argument of our sincerity, and as an ornament to our profession. Observe next, What was then, and is now, the lot and portion of good men, namely, to be evil spoken of as evil-doers: *Whereas they speak evil of you as evil-doers.* Christ himself did not escape the

scourge of the tongue; he was charged with gluttony, blasphemy, imposture, with having a devil, and with working miracles by the power of the devil; and it is sufficient for the disciple to be as his master was. Yet mark, they speak evil of you, says the apostle, *as evil doers*: to be an evil-doer is miserable, but not to be spoken of as an evil-doer. *Nemo miser sensu alieno*, no man is miserable in another man's evil opinion of him: a bad report, much less a bad opinion, makes no body a bad man; if it be enough to censure and accuse, who can be innocent? Observe again, The apostle exhorts these believing Jews to a conspicuous fruitfulness in good works: *That they may by your good works which they shall behold*: implying, that Christianity sets men to work, (though we shall never be saved for our works, yet without working we can never be saved,) and that good works may and ought to be so done, that men may behold them; though we must not do good works to be seen of men, yet we ought to do good works that may be seen of men, *Matt. v. 16*. how else can men be patterns of good works, as they are required, *Ti. ii. 7*. if their good works be not conspicuous, and exposed to the world? Observe lastly, The blessed fruit and effect of good works: they cause such as behold them to *glorify God in the day of visitation*. This may be understood two ways, 1. With respect to believers: your good works will cause the wicked world to glorify God in the day of your visitation, that is, in the day of your persecution and affliction; though they afflict and persecute you, yet they shall glorify God when they behold your faith, your patience, your constancy in and under sufferings, in the day of your visitation. 2. With respect to the wicked; and so the day of visitation is the day of their conversion; and then the exhortation is, to be so conspicuous in good works, that their adversaries may praise and glorify God, when he shall visit them with his grace, and draw them by his gospel, to believe in his Son: the day of saving conversion is a day of gracious visitation.

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the King, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. 15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

Our apostle having exhorted them in general to take care that their conversation be honest among the Gentiles, he now descends to particular duties, which he advises them to be very exemplary in the performance of. And the first is, in their subjection to governors and government; submit yourselves, says he, to every civil ruler, both supreme and subordinate. Where observe, 1. How the apostle calls magistracy and civil government, though originally of divine institution, an *ordnance of man*. First, As to the end of it, it being appointed and ordained for the good and benefit of man. Secondly, In reference to the kind of it, every nation having a liberty to choose what kind and form of government human prudence shall direct them to, as most agreeable to, and commodious for, the people. Observe, 2. The quality of that obedience and subjection which is to be given unto magistrates, it *must be for the Lord's sake*, that is, in obedience to the command of God, and with an eye at the honour and glory of God. Christianity is no enemy to the civil right of princes, it requires subjection for conscience, *Prov. viii. 15*. *By me, says God, kings reign*; some read it, *for me kings reign*; both are true: princes then hold not their crowns either from the pope or from the people, to be kicked off by the one, or to be plucked off by the other, at their pleasure: *Submit yourselves*, says our apostle, *to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*. Observe, 3. The reasons assigned why magistrates should be thus subjected and submitted to; namely, 1. Because *they are sent by God for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well*; the magistrate's office is to punish evil-doers; the fear of the magistrate's sword awes many men more than the fear of God's hand. If some men were not gods among men, many men would be devils among men; there would be no living among those who fear not the invisible God in heaven, if there were not some visible gods on earth to fear. 2. Because God will, by this their subjection given to magistrates and governors, silence, or, as the word signifies, put a muzzle upon the mouth of, foolish and unreasonable men, who rage against his people, as if they were enemies to order and government: by this kind of well-doing in particular, namely, by subjection and obedience to rulers in the Lord, and for the Lord's sake, we put to silence the foolishness of wicked men.

16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

Here our apostle answers an objection, which he foresaw the Christian Jews ready to make against this duty of subjection, namely, "that they were a free people, as Jews, and ought to preserve their liberty, and own no governors that were not of their own nation: and as Christians they looked upon themselves as Christ's free-men:" whereas Christian liberty exempts no man from the duty of civil subjection: the liberty Christ has purchased for believers is a freedom from sin and Satan, from sinful servitude: Christ makes all his subjects free, but it is with a freedom from spiritual bondage, and not from civil subjection; consequently, to plead our Christian liberty in bar to that obedience which we owe our superiors and governors, either civil or ecclesiastical, is to use our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, and as a covering for that disobedience which is hateful to God, and injurious to mankind, as being destructive of order and government, which is the beauty and the bond of human society.

17 Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

Here are four very important duties recommended to us in this short verse. 1. *To honour all men*; no man is to be despised by us, but every man duly respected according to his place and station. There is a common honour, and a tribute of civil respect, payable to every man; though some men forfeit it by acting below men; a vile person is contemptible, though great; bare greatness is no guard against contempt; but the rags of a good man cannot obscure his worth, nor hinder him from true honour in the hearts and from the tongues of wise men: honour all men, but especially good men. 2. *Love the brotherhood*; as there is general respect due to all men, so there is a special love due to the brethren, to all the saints, of what nation and country soever, of what estate and condition soever, high and low, rich and poor, of what judgment and opinion soever; therefore the apostle calls upon us to love the brotherhood, the whole fraternity and society of Christians, by what unhappy means and characters of reproach soever distinguished: there is no better evidence of the life of grace in ourselves, than the love of grace in another. 3. *Fear God*; that is, live in a religious dread of his name, as a glorious God, and a gracious Father; have a reverential awe and fear of his majesty immoveably fixed and implanted in your souls; to the production of which a double apprehension is neces-

sary, namely, the inconceivable majesty of God, and the miserable vileness of the sinner. 4. *Honour the King*; this duty consists in reverencing their persons, in obeying their lawful commands, in a cheerful payment of their dues, in praying affectionately for them, and in praising God for the blessing of their government. Nero, the worst of kings, and the persecutor of Christians, was now on the throne, yet the command is express to honour him. And if we consider the words in their connexion and conjunction one with another, *Fear God, and honour the king*, we learn, That religion and the fear of God do best qualify persons to be good subjects, this is the true and steady principle of loyalty; that obedience to governors that is lasting, is for conscience-sake to the command of God: where there is no fear of God in the heart, there will be no regard to the command of God in the life. Lastly, These words may be considered, as in their conjunction, so in their order in which they stand; first, *fear God*, and then *honour the king*; intimating that the fear of God must be the rule and guide of our subjection unto governors; it is no disparagement to our superiors to be under God, and so to be looked upon by their subjects; let such as pretend to fear God, show it by being loyal subjects; and let such as would be thought most loyal subjects, evidence it by their awful and religious fear of God.

18 *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear*; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. 19 *For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully*. 20 *For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently: this is acceptable with God*.

Observe here, 1. The order and method of our apostle in the exhortations given to Christians in this epistle: he first excites them in the general practice of their duty, and to be holy in all manner of conversation, and next binds upon them the performance of relative and particular duties. In the foregoing verses he insisted upon the duties of subjects towards magistrates and governors; in this verse he propounds the duty of servants towards their masters. Thus let Christian servants be subject to their masters, whether Christian or heathen, giving due reverence and respect, not only to such as are kind and gentle, but to such

as are froward and wrathful. Learn hence, That such as are in the lowest condition, being servants, yea, the meanest of servants, may glorify God in that condition. Learn, 2. That servants, to the end that they may glorify God in their servile condition, must be subject to their masters with all fear; yea, even to wicked and froward masters; because the ground of their obedience is the will and command of God, which binds them to their duty to their masters, though their masters fail and fall short in their duty to them. Observe,

2. The several arguments made use of by St. Peter to enforce this duty upon servants. 1. This is highly acceptable and well-pleasing unto God, and will procure a gracious reward. We shall certainly receive a glorious reward from God for what we suffer wrongfully and unjustly from men. This is thank-worthy, and this is acceptable with God. 2. From the indecency of the contrary; because it is no virtue, but a just punishment for evil doers, to suffer for their evil deeds. Though to suffer patiently when we suffer justly is praise-worthy, yet not comparable with the praise of suffering patiently when we suffer unjustly. To do well, and then to suffer patiently, as for ill-doing, will meet with a gracious, yea, with a glorious reward. *What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God.*

21 For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Observe here, two farther arguments to excite and move Christians to patience under unjust sufferings. 1. *Hereunto*, says the apostle, *were ye called*, that is, by your profession of Christianity: religion obliges you to suffer, and to suffer with patience; you must bear the cross, before you wear the crown; to this you are called, and with this you have been acquainted. 2. You should not think much to suffer patiently, when you suffer unjustly, because Christ, your captain and guide, did so before you; he was the most meek and patient endurer that ever was, of the greatest and most wrongful sufferings that ever were. Note here, That although the example of our Saviour be here propounded to us with a special regard to the particular virtue of patience under unjust sufferings, yet ought it to be extended to all graces and duties, and improved as a pattern for the love and practice of universal holiness: *Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

The practice and example of the holy Jesus, in all the ordinary acts of his obedience, ought to be propounded by all his disciples and followers as the grand pattern of our imitation; it being a safe and unerring example, an easy familiar example, a powerful and encouraging example, and the most instructive and universal example that ever was given to the world, being a most absolute and perfect pattern of holiness.

22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Our apostle proceeds to represent and recommend our Lord Jesus Christ as the mirror and perfect pattern of patience under the sharpest sufferings; he acquaints us, 1. With his pure and spotless innocency; he did no sin, therefore could not suffer for doing evil; *no guile was found in his mouth*, neither in his expressions, nor in his actions; he never did ill either in word or deed, but was a perfect pattern of unblamable holiness. Next, our apostle recommends to us his invincible patience under all his sufferings, telling us, that although Christ was most shamefully *reviled*, having the dirt of a thousand scandals, slanders, reproaches, and blasphemies, cast upon him, yet *he reviled not again*, not giving them one ill word for all. And *when he suffered* all manner of injuries and indignities at once, being buffeted, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and crucified, though he had power sufficient to look them into nothing, to frown them into hell, yet *he threatened them not* with the least revenge, but prayed for his murderers, and committed his cause to a just and righteous God: *He threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* Blessed Jesus! help us to imitate thy patience under sufferings, and reproaches, and never let us be found rendering to any, evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing for cursing, courtesies for injuries, affability for affronts; let us at no time be overcome of evil, but labour at all times to overcome evil with good. Note, lastly, How our apostle takes notice, that the sufferings of Christ were not only exemplary, but satis-

factory; he did not only suffer patiently, but meritoriously; *He his own self bare our sins in his own body upon the tree.* Note here, 1. What was borne, *our sin*, that is, the guilt and punishment of our sin. 2. Who bare it, Christ *his own self*. This imports, 3. The singularity of his sufferings, he had no partner or sharer with him in what he bare, *he trod the wine-press alone.* 2. The sufficiency of his sufferings, he *himself* bare our sins; he who was God-man, the Lamb of God, and as such took away the sin of the world. 3. How he bare it, *in his own body upon the tree*; that is, in his human nature upon the cross. Christ suffered in his soul as well as in his body, and both were satisfactory to divine justice, but his bodily sufferings are only mentioned, because these were most visible. 4. The great ends of his sufferings, namely, expiation of sin, and mortification of sin; our sins were expiated on the tree by Christ's suffering for us in his own body; and by his death he also purchased virtue for mortifying sin in us, and for quickening us unto holiness of life, that, as he died for sin, we should die unto sin; and as he rose again and revived, never to die more, so should we, being dead unto sin, live no longer therein: *He himself bare our sins in his own body upon the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes, that is, by whose expiatory sufferings, we are healed*; the wounds made in our souls by the guilt and power of sin, are mercifully and meritoriously healed; the guilt of sin is pardoned, the power of sin subdued, and all the invaluable fruits and benefits of the Redeemer's death obtained. Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Observe here, 1. The state and condition in which both Jews and Gentiles were found before their conversion to Christianity; they were like sheep going astray and lost; wandering in the ways of sin and unbelief, to their threatened ruin and destruction. Observe, 2. The tender care of Christ, that great and good Shepherd, in bringing home these lost sheep upon his shoulders, *Isa. xl. 11.* into his fold the obchurch: *Ye are now returned to the Shepherd*, to him that will feed you in green pastures, and preserve you to his heavenly kingdom. The Shepherd gives life to his sheep, and also lays down his life for his sheep. Observe, 3. The additional title given to Christ, he is styled the *Bishop of our souls*; he that with tenderness, care, and dili-

gence, doth inspect and visit all his charge; he is the universal Bishop, the Bishop of bishops, who has the charge of all the flocks, and of the shepherds too, and to whom all bishops and shepherds must become accountable. God Almighty give them all such grace to be faithful, such wisdom to be prudent, that love to himself, that zeal for Christ, that tenderness for souls, such meekness and humility, such patience and charity, such mortification and self-denial, as become persons of their holy character and profession; always remembering, that the salvation of one precious soul, for which the great Shepherd died, is infinitely worth the most indefatigable labours of their whole lives: that, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, they may receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Amen.

CHAP. III.

LIKewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; 2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing chapter, entered upon an exhortation to the practice of relative duties, particularly of subjects towards their rulers, and of servants towards their masters, he continues here his exhortation to husbands and wives in the former part of this chapter, beginning first with the wives' duty, (as did St. Paul in all his epistles,) because their duty of subjection is the most hard and difficult duty; *Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands.* Observe here, 1. The duty enjoined, *subjection*; that is, a loving and delightful obedience to the husband, owning of and submitting to his authority, in compliance with the command of God. Observe, 2. The persons from whom and to whom this subjection is due: from every wife to her own husband, believer or unbeliever, Christian or infidel; it is not lawful, upon any pretence whatever, for the wife to cast off this duty, which by the law of her creation, and the express command of God, is bound upon her. Observe, 3. One special reason assigned why such wives as have unbelieving, wicked, and unconverted husbands, should take particular care to express that fear and reverence towards God, subjection and obedience, that chastity and conjugal affection towards their husbands, which the word of God calls for; namely,

that such husbands as obey not the word, may without the word (preached) be won to the faith, by observing the efficacy and power of the word in the conversation of the wives. Learn hence, That the wives' holy and humble, pious and prudent, meek and patient, chaste and unsuspected conversation before God and the world, does recommend not only their persons to the love and esteem of their husbands, but also their faith and holy religion, (which produces such good fruits,) to their approbation and choice: *If any obey not the word, they may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.*

3 Those adorning, let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel: 4 But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Our apostle's next advice, here given to wives, is concerning their attire; this is laid down, first, negatively, what it should not be, not an outward adorning, attended with great curiosity and exactness in dressing the body with plaited hair, gold chains, gay and gaudy apparel, and such like. Where note, That plaited hair, gold chains, and costly attire, were then the attire of lewd women; whores only or chiefly were so decked and adorned, and therefore were absolutely forbidden to the Christian women by our apostles: but when such attire ceases to be a mark of such distinction, it may be worn by Christian women, provided it be done without pride, and without too great expense both of time and treasure: always remembering that gravity in apparel, and wearing such a dress as is soon put on, is most honourable and best becoming Christian women. "I had rather, says one, go like the wild Indians, than have those thousands of hours to answer for, which some have spent between the glass and the comb." Observe here, That this text doth not absolutely forbid the wearing of ornaments or costly apparel by such persons whose quality will answer it, but only forbids pride and vanity, affectation and ostentation, in the wearing of them; it is not only lawful to cover the body, but to adorn the body; Abraham had never sent ear-rings and bracelets to Rebekah, had they been sinful in their use: to wear such things beyond our purse and place, and to make ourselves or others poor by making ourselves fine, is very sinful, but otherwise, lawful. Observe next,

Our apostle's affirmative precept for the woman's adorning, with the reasons of it, verse 4. But *let it be the hidden man of the heart, &c.* Where note, 1. What must be apparelled and adorned, *the hidden man of the heart*; that is, the soul, which wants both covering and adorning as well as the body, sin having made both naked to their shame. Note, 2. With what the hidden man of the heart must be apparelled; not with fine clothes, they will not cover a naked soul, but with the sanctifying graces of the Spirit of God, with humility and meekness, with piety and prudence, which ornaments will never wax old, nor grow out of fashion, as others do, and are also of precious esteem with God himself, they are in the sight of God of great price: these virtues are in themselves, and render the possessors of them truly valuable in the sight and esteem of God. Upon the whole, then, it evidently appears, that the negation here is not absolute, but comparative; as if the apostle had said, "God will have the hidden man of your heart adorned with grace, and delights more to see that, than your bodies adorned with precious jewels and costly apparel; and accordingly, if women affect finery, and would appear beautiful, let them choose the best ornaments, those of the mind and heart, which will attract the eye of God towards them, rather than those external ones, which serve only to draw man's eye to an admiration of them."

5 For after this manner in the old time, the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands; 6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Our apostle in these two verses enforces the exhortation and advice given to women in the foregoing verses, namely, to attire themselves with outward modesty and inward meekness, by a twofold argument: 1. From the example of holy women in general under the Old Testament, whose praise is in the scripture, not for the external adorning of the body, but for their affiance and trust in God, and their subjection paid to their own husbands. Here note, 1. That holiness, or the duties of the first table, are required of women as well as of men: and God accepts holiness in them as well as in men, *The holy women.* Note, 2. That all holy women of old did, and always ought to, make conscience of their duty to their husbands, particularly

of subjection, that so good example may be given by them, and taken from them, for others to do the like: the virtue of good example is lasting, it may do good many years after the example is given; the example of these holy women had a fresh power to do good many thousand years after it was given, and will still have to the world's end. 1. Another argument is taken from the example of Sarah, who meekly obeyed Abraham, acknowledging him to be her lord; the daughters of whose faith, and the heirs of whose blessing, such wives will appear and prove themselves to be, who do as Sarah did, not suffering themselves by any fears or terrors to be diverted from, nor by any fits of passion and grief to be disturbed in, the performance of that duty which God requires, and the husband expects: *Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.* Observe here, 1. That the faithful practice and conscientious discharge of domestic and relative duties, is much taken notice of by God, and had in remembrance with him, particularly the wife's duty, faithfully discharged to the froward husband, is and shall be had in everlasting remembrance with God. Observe, 2. That the same duty and reverence, the same subjection and obedience, which Sarah gave to Abraham, is due and payable to every husband, else the apostle's argument is of no force. Some might say, Abraham was a great man. *Ans.* True, but Sarah obeyed him as her husband, as well as wives ought to do, because the command of God requires honour and reverence to be given to all husbands, as husbands. Observe, lastly, With what great and wonderful goodness and clemency the Lord is pleased to overlook the failings and infirmities of his upright servants; we find in Sarah's story, *Gen. xviii.* that she spake very unhandsomely, and laughed indecently, when the angel came and told her she should have a son; but all that is passed by in silence, and that one good word she gave her husband, calling him *lord*, is mentioned here by St. Peter to her eternal honour. The Lord has a gracious respect to a little pure gold, though mingled with much dross, and in a great heap of sin: if he can espy, he will accept of a little spark of true grace. O Lord! thou wilt not bring our infirmities and slips to account against us, nor rigidly reckon with us for the same, if our hearts be upright with thee: make us then sound in thy statutes, that we may not be ashamed.

7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge,

giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Next our apostle proceeds to direct and exhort husbands to the practice of their respective duties; the general and comprehensive duty of the husband here mentioned is cohabitation, under which all matrimonial duties are contained: *Dwell with your wives according to knowledge;* that is, as becomes wise and understanding men, that will understand their duty, and, as the rule of Christianity directs, giving just honour and due respect unto them, and exercising great tenderness towards them. Next observe, The reason subjoined to enforce this duty upon husbands: 1. Because wives are the weaker vessels, subject to infirmities, and more liable to contempt; therefore their husbands should contribute their wisdom and authority to support their honour, and preserve them from being despised either by children or servants. 2. Because wives are not only co-partners with their husbands in their temporal good things, but also co-heirs of saving grace with them, *heirs together of the grace of life.* 3. Because otherwise their prayers, one with, and one for, another, would be obstructed and disturbed; *That your prayers be not hindered.* Note here, That all sinful walking in general, but discord and discontent between husband and wife in particular, doth exceedingly hinder prayer: it oftentimes hinders from the very act of prayer, that the duty is laid aside; it flates and deadens our spirits, and straitens our hearts in prayer, and it hinders the effect, fruit, and success, of our prayers; it makes persons in that condition, that they have no heart to come before God, nor care to lift up their faces to him. From the whole learn, That it ought to be the mutual care of married couples so to order all their carriage towards each other, that in their houses they hinder not any holy duties; to hinder the practice of religion is repugnant to the great ends of this relation; some hinder by their wickedness, others by their discontent and frowardness; take we care that neither the husband's nor wife's heart be deadened, nor their heart damped to holy duties, by either of their sinful or froward behaviour; that family will be little in praying that is much in squabbling and contending one with another.

8 Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another: love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous; 9 Not rendering evil for

evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. 10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: 11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. 13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

Our apostle having finished his exhortation to relative duties, namely, of husbands and wives, masters and servants, magistrates and subjects, he now enters upon another subject, namely, that of sufferings, showing us a prudential way and manner how to avoid sufferings, that they may not come upon us; and next how to avoid impatience under sufferings, if it be the will of God that they do come upon us. The former of these is spoken to in the verses now before us, in which he exhorts us to the practice of those virtues which are apt to reconcile, and gain the affections of men towards us, particularly he exhorts to unity and concord. *Be all of one mind*; to sympathize one with another in and under sufferings, and to bear with one another's infirmities, to be courteous towards all, sweet and affable in our demeanour, provided our courtesy be neither a snare to ourselves, nor an encouragement to others in their sins, abstaining from all injuries and provocations, from all revenge both in act and in desire, not reviling them that rail at us, but giving good words for bad ones, *for we are hereunto called, that we should inherit a blessing*; that is, Christ by his gospel hath called, and by his example encouraged, us thus to do, that we may be blessed. Next observe, that to encourage us to the perpetual practice of these virtues, our apostle assures us, that thereby we should most effectually consult the safety and comfort of our lives: *For he that loveth life*, that is, quietness and peace, which is the comfort of life, the likeliest way to obtain it, is, to keep his tongue from speaking evil of others, and his lips from uttering falsehood and deceit; plainly intimating, that it is men's unbridled tongues which bring most of their troubles upon them. He advises also to *eschew evil*, to avoid and to abhor

every thing that is vile and sinful; and to do good, that is, all the good we can, to all men; to seek peace, and ensue it, that is, to depart sometimes from our own right to obtain peace, and to follow hard after it, though it flies before us. And farther our apostle assures us, that this innocency of conversation is not only the way to gain the friendship of man, but to obtain the favour of God, and to engage his providence for our protection: *For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry*: as if he had said, "The eye of God's special care will be continually watching over you for good, to save you from unreasonable men, and he will hear your prayers and all your distresses; and the face of the Lord, his angry countenance, will be against them that wrong you and do evil to you, to return it upon their own heads." So that the sum of all is, that an innocent and harmless, a quiet, peaceable, and obliging deportment, doth naturally tend to preserve us from evil, and from evil men; *for who is he that can be so unnatural and ungrateful as to harm us, if we be followers of that which is good?* That is, if we be civil and obliging to them, they cannot find in their hearts to be injurious and unkind to us. *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* Here note, That the apostle doth not absolutely say none will harm us, but he speaks of it as so very unreasonable and improbable a thing, that we may presume it will not ordinarily and often happen: not but that good men are obnoxious to harm: the most unblemished and shining virtue will not at all times and in all cases be exempt from injury and ill-treatment; but the following of that which is good doth in its nature tend to secure us from the malice and mischief of men, and very frequently does it, and is the best and most effectual means in order to it; he must love mischief for mischief's sake, that will be mischievous to him who never offered him any occasion, or gave him any provocation: therefore let us never be weary of well-doing, seeing doing good to men is ordinarily a security against injuries from men, by recommending us to the favour and protection of God, and to the esteem and good-will of mankind; none shall harm them that do good, for all harms shall tend to their good.

14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled:

As if the apostle had said, "Though fol-

lowing that which is good be, generally speaking, a sure and certain way to keep you from harm, yet should it so happen, that notwithstanding all your piety and prudence, you should suffer for well-doing, ye are happy and not miserable; therefore be not afraid of their terrors and threatenings, neither be ye troubled for what they can inflict upon you." Note hence, 1. That to suffer affliction and persecution for righteousness' sake, doth not hinder, but further our happiness; *If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye*, for so suffered your Saviour that went before you. Note, 2. That when God calls us forth to suffer for righteousness' sake, we must fortify ourselves against all fear: no terrors must trouble us, no apprehended dangers or difficulties must dismay us: *Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled*.

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts;—

This phrase in scripture imports, 1. A firm belief of God's Almighty power, that he can protect from sufferings; and a full affiance in his goodness and providence, that he will do it, if it be good for us. 2. It is from the heart to own and believe the truth of all that God delivers in his word by way of promise to his people, and by way of threatening to their enemies, that *his eyes are over the righteous, and his face against them that do evil*. 3. To sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, is always to maintain upon our minds such an holy fear, and awful reverence of God, as will effectually prevail upon us to dread more the displeasure of God, than any thing we can suffer at the hand of man. Learn hence, 1. That when sufferings are approaching we ought to strengthen our hearts against all fears of suffering, by putting our trust in God. 2. That by this trust and confidence in God in a suffering hour, we do eminently sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, *Isa. viii. 13. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear and your dread*.

—And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear:

As if the apostle had said, "If you be Christians indeed, you are not without hope, an hope of everlasting bliss and happiness, which will infinitely recompense you hereafter for all the hard things which you suffer for the sake of Christianity here; and forasmuch as this your hope is not a vain and groundless expectation, but a rational hope, be always ready to render a

reason of that hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. Learn hence, 1. That the Christian's hope is a rational hope, he has a reason to hope for what he hopes, his hope is well-grounded upon the promise of God, upon the purchase of Christ, and upon the operations of the Holy Spirit, quickening him by its renovation, leading him by its manuduction, actuating him by its influence, animating him in devotions by its assistances, by being the author of all that grace that is in him, and of all that good that is done by him. Learn, 2. That it is a Christian's duty to be always ready to render a reason of this his hope, when the glory of God, the honour of religion, and the good of others do require it. Learn, 3. That this must not be done with vanity and ostentation, but with meekness and fear: *Be always ready to render a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*.

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. 17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.

Here our apostle adds his advice to Christians, that they silence and put to shame their adversaries, by their works as well as by their words, by their holy conversation, together with their rational disputations: he bade them in the former verse be always ready to make a profession of their faith, and to render a reason of their hope; here he bids them confute gainsayers by a good conversation, and in order thereunto to keep continually an innocent mind and a clear conscience, pure from guile, and clear from guilt: *Having a good conscience, that such as speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, may be ashamed*. Note here, 1. That let the servants of Christ be never so innocent in their lives, and circumspect in their carriage, yet there are those that will censure them as bad men, and slander them as evil doers. Note, 2. That a good conscience, accompanied with a good conversation, is the most effectual mean to stop the mouth of slander, and to put such as accuse us falsely, to shame. Note, 3. That when sufferings and persecutions do come, after all, the consideration that we suffer not for evil, but for well-doing, will be a sufficient support and consolation to us. *It is better, if God will have us suffer, that it be for well-doing; better for us, but worse for our persecutors; for now the body only suffers, while the soul is free*.

18 For Christ also hath once suf-

forer for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit :

These words are brought in as a strong argument, why Christians that suffer wrongfully should bear it patiently; it was our Saviour's own case; he that had perfect innocency and unspotted righteousness, suffered in the severest manner for us that were unrighteous, that he might reconcile us to God, *being put to death in the flesh*, that is, in our human nature, *but quickened by the Spirit*, or raised to life again by the power of his godhead; it doth therefore well become all his followers cheerfully to undergo all manner of sufferings for him, which they meet with in their duty to him. Note here, 1. Christ did not barely suffer for our good, but he suffered in our stead: he is not only said to suffer for us, but to suffer for our sins, that is, the punishment of our sins; for no man was ever said to suffer for sin that did not undergo and endure the punishment of sin. As the sin-offering under the law is called an offering for sin, because it did expiate the guilt of sin, by dying in the place and stead of the offender; in like manner, when the death of Christ is called an offering for sin, what can it import, but that he suffered to make atonement for sin in our place and stead? *The just for the unjust*; if these words do not imply the substitution of Christ as our surety, and his suffering the punishment due to our sins, what words can express it! Note, 2. That the great end of Christ's bitter death and bloody sufferings, was to bring all those for whom he died unto God; now Christ's bringing us to God imports our apostasy from him, and our inability to return to him; that sin unsatisfied for, which was the great bar to keep us from him, is mercifully removed by him, and that our chief happiness consists in the enjoyment of him.

—Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison: 20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.

As if St Peter had said, "Though Christ suffered for our sins, and was put to death in his human nature, or flesh, yet he was quickened and made alive by the Spirit, in

which, or by which Spirit, he went and preached to the spirits in prison, which in the days of Noah were hardened in sin and disobedience, whilst the long-suffering of God endured them, and waited for their repentance no less than an hundred and twenty years, whilst the ark was making and preparing, and Noah preached to them; yet so impenitent were they to the very last, that only eight were saved in the ark." Note here, 1. That the old world before the flood were in prison whilst here on earth, being in bondage and captivity to sin and Satan, held in the chains of their lusts, and in the bondage of their iniquity; such as are in bondage to sin, are captives in Satan's prison: the old world was also in prison whilst on earth, as having received from God the sentence of destruction, and were reserved as in prison, against the day of slaughter, if they repented not within an hundred and twenty years. Note, 2. That Christ by his Spirit did preach to the old world in the ministry of his prophets, Enoch and Noah; and his Spirit did chide with them and reprove them, in order to their bringing to repentance. Note, 3. That those refractory and hardened sinners, for despising the offers of grace made to them, were for their disobedience clapped up in the prison of hell, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire; such as were cast into prison in Noah's time, were all fast in St Peter's time: there is no picking the locks of hell gates, no breaking through the walls of the fiery Tophet; hell has a door to take in, but none to let out. Note, 4. That though Christ by his Spirit preached to the spirits in prison, yet it was not when they were in prison, I mean in the prison of hell, but when here on earth; there are no sermons in hell, no conditions of happiness proposed, no tenders of salvation propounded there; Christ preached to these prisoners to prevent their imprisonment, Christ preached to these men, who were now in prison, that they might not have been imprisoned. Note lastly, That the obstinate infidelity, and sottish stupidity, of the old world, was amazing, that after an hundred and twenty years' preaching, no more than eight persons should be persuaded into the belief of the world's destruction. From the beginning we find that the prophets of God had cause to complain that *few have believed their report*: do not the ministers of God now groan to God, that they run in vain, and labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought? From the beginning it has been so. Lord! if thou honourest any of us with better success, and givest us to see the fruit of our labours in the lives of our people, help us

to set the crown of praise on the head of thine own grace, and say, *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, &c.* "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."

21 The like figure whereunto, *even* baptism, doth also save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Observe here, 1. The type and the anti-type, the ark and baptism; their salvation from the deluge, by the ark, prefigureth our salvation from God's wrath by baptism. As all that were without the ark perished, and all within the ark were saved; so all that are ingrafted into Christ by faith, whereof baptism is a seal, are saved, whilst the unbelieving and unbaptized part of the world perish. Baptism is such a mean of spiritual salvation now, as the ark was of Noah's and his family's temporal salvation then: *the like figure whereunto, baptism now saveth us.* Observe, 2. How our apostle expresses himself, and plainly declares what he means by that baptism which is saving; negatively, it is not the outward ceremony of sprinkling the face, or washing the body with water, that is saving, or any ways pleasing unto God, save only as it is an act and exercise of our obedience to his command and will; but positively, it is *the answer of a good conscience towards God*, that is, the faithful answer of a resolved soul in the covenant of baptism, who gives up himself to the obedience of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and renounces the world, the flesh, and the devil; this covenanting is the condition of salvation, and baptism but the sign. Learn hence, The outward baptism alone saves none, but the inward only; and the sign and singular effect of inward baptism, is *the answer of a good conscience towards God*. Yet we must not conclude, with the Anabaptists, from this text that baptism can be of no saving advantage to infants, because, they cannot at present make this answer of a good conscience: for in the same manner speaks St. Paul of circumcision, that the true circumcision before God is the inward circumcision of the heart and spirit, and not the outward circumcision of the flesh. But who dare argue from thence, that the Jewish infants, for want of the inward circumcision, must not be admitted to the outward? The argument is the very same: will you say that the answer of a good conscience is absolutely necessary,

and expressly required, that baptism may be beneficial; therefore they only are to be baptized that can make this answer? The same may we say, that the inward circumcision of the heart was required as the only acceptable circumcision in the sight of God: therefore they only are to be circumcised, who have this inward circumcision of the heart. But as the one was the will of God, so is the other. True indeed, The Jews did not admit proselytes to circumcision then, no more will we admit adult persons to baptism now, without the answer of a good conscience, or a solemn stipulation to be the Lord's for ever: but they admitted infants to circumcision without it; in like manner, the Christian church now admits the children of Christian parents to baptism, without any such answer made by them, but for them only.

22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God: angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Our apostle having in the close of the former verse, spoken of the resurrection of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby, he makes mention in this verse, 1. Of his going into heaven, there to despatch all that remained to be done for the completing the salvation of his people. 2. He is here affirmed to be at God's right hand. The right hand is the upper hand, the hand of honour; and the right hand is the hand of power; accordingly Christ sitting at God's right hand, as an enthroned king, imports sovereign honour and supreme power; and that God has exalted his Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to his kingdom in heaven. 3. It is asserted, that angels, authorities, and powers are made subject to him; that is, our Jesus, in whom we hope, believe, and trust, is advanced in heaven to a pre-eminency above, and to a superiority over, all angels and celestial powers, waiting and expecting until all his enemies on earth become his footstool. For though his victory is yet incomplete and inconsummate, and we see not all things yet put under him, it may suffice at present that we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and that's enough to show that the power of his enemies is broken; and that though they make some opposition still, yet it is to no purpose at all: for refusing to submit to his sceptre, they will fall by the rod of his strength, Angels and principalities in heaven, and all powers and potentates upon earth, being made subject unto him.

CHAP. IV.

The argument which our apostle pursues in this chapter, is the same which he had prosecuted in the former. The first part of the chapter is exhortatory, urging all the professors of Christianity to the love and practice of universal holiness and purity. The second part is consolatory, against persecutions and sufferings for the cause of Christ, which were then inevitably coming upon them from the enemies of Christianity. The exhortations unto, and the arguments for, holiness, are many, contained in the first verses of this chapter, in which our apostle thus bespeaks them:

FORASMUCH then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin; 2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

These words may be considered, 1. As an inference drawn from what the apostle had asserted in the foregoing chapter, namely, That Christ Jesus suffered for our sins, *the just for the unjust*; v. 18. Now, says the apostle, forasmuch as Christ has thus suffered for us, first as our surety and representative, in a way of satisfaction; Secondly, as our pattern and example, in order to our imitation: *let us arm ourselves with the same mind and resolution*, to be conformed to him in his death, dying to sin as he died for sin: for he that hath crucified the flesh, and mortified his corrupt nature, in imitation of Christ's suffering in our flesh and nature, that man hath ceased from sin, that is, from living unto sin, or serving sin any longer, but spends the remainder of his life wholly according to God's will, not according to his own or other's lustful desires and inclinations. 2. These words may be considered as an argument to excite Christians to eschew evil and do good, which he had pressed upon them in the former chapter, from the example of Christ. And the force of the argument lies thus: "All Christians should be armed with the same mind and resolution against sin, and for holiness, that Christ was. But Christ having suffered in the flesh for sin, and ceased from sin, lived in the Spirit unto God: therefore all Christians should wholly endeavour all they can to cease from sin, and live no more to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abomina-

ble idolatries: 4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*: 5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

Observe here, 1. That this epistle was written and directed, not only to the Jewish natives, but to the Gentile proselytes and converts; this is evident from the apostle's putting them in mind that there was a time, namely, before their conversion, *when they wrought the will of the Gentiles*. Observe, 2. The black and dismal sins which the Gentiles were guilty of, and wallowed in, before their conversion to Christianity, namely, all manner of sensuality, uncleanness, excess in drinking, reveling, banquetings and idolatries, joined with the rest of their abominations. Lord, how exalting our obligations, *who were sinners of the Gentiles*, for calling us out of this darkness (worse than Egyptian) into marvellous light by the gospel. Observe, 3. The argument used to excite them to quit and abandon the fore-mentioned sins now in their converted state, which they had before indulged themselves in the practice of, in their heathen state: the time past may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles; as if he had said, "Surely you have had enough, enough of sin, and too much, in your unregenerate state; your lusts have taken up too much of your lives, and had too much of your love." Learn hence, That the true penitent, and sincere convert, is one that has had enough of sin, yea, more than enough: one moment's service of sin is more service than we owe it: we can never serve Christ too long, and our lust too short a time. Learn, 2. That this consideration, how long some of us served sin before conversion, should be a forcible argument to excite and quicken us unto greater measures and degrees of holiness in our regenerate and converted state. Observe, 4. What usage such Christians must expect from the men of the world, who come out from among them, and refuse to run any longer into the same excess of riot with them. 1. *They think it strange*: they admire and wonder at them, as we do at strangers that come out of another country. And, 2. *They speak evil of them*, because they will not be as bad and as mad as themselves. *They think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you*. Learn hence, 1. That wicked men are excessively riotous, or that there is an excess of riot and sin, which wicked men upon all occasions run

into. Learn, 2. That such men wonder and think it very strange, that good men are not as excessively riotous as themselves. 3. That because they will not so run, therefore they speak evil of them. Observe, lastly, The impartiality and severity of that account which the wicked men of the world must render to God, the universal Judge, for all their hard speeches which they have uttered against the righteous: *Who shall give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.* Note here, 1.

There must and shall be a day of account: there must be one, because there never yet was one; there shall be one, because God has made man an accountable creature: he can give, and therefore he shall give, an account of his actions; for he has a principle of reason to know what he does, and a liberty of choice to govern himself, and a rule to direct him what to choose, and what to refuse; and consequently the actions, proceeding from him, must and shall be accounted for by him. Note, 2. That this account must be given to Christ, the supreme and universal Judge both of quick and dead; partly, as a fitting reward for his great humiliation and sufferings; and, partly, that the world may see what a great and excellent Person he was, who came to visit them in great humility; and partly, to give advantage to the future judgment, in that God has appointed a man for our judge, who is flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, one that is sensible of the follies, temptations, and infirmities, of mankind, and pities them, and will make favourable allowances for them; nay, one that is God as well as man, from whom we may expect all the goodness of a God, and all the tender compassion of a man, in their utmost perfection; so that no man need fear such a judge, who has not out-sinned the mercies of a God, and the tender compassions of a man: for if either God or man help us, we are safe in that day, when we shall give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

6 For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

By the dead here, some understand the Gentile world, dead in trespasses and sins, to whom the gospel was preached when they were thus spiritually dead and buried in sensuality, that they might judge and condemn, oppose and strive against, mortify and subdue, those sensual desires and carnal appetites which they indulge, whilst

they lived as natural men, without the knowledge of God's will, and the assistance of his grace and Spirit: others do understand the words of such as are naturally dead, that the gospel was preached to them who were long since dead, even our forefathers, that lived and died before Christ's coming, and that they had the gospel preached to them, while they were alive, that so they might mortify all their sinful lusts and corrupt affections, and live new lives, according to the direction and command of God in his holy word. Learn hence, That the condition of men now living, and of those that lived heretofore in all ages, is one and the same, having the same gospel for substance preached to them, and accordingly the same duties of mortification and holiness required of them.

7 But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

These words are brought by our apostle as a fresh argument to persuade the Christian Jews to the practice of sincere holiness: *the end of all things*, that is, of the Jewish state and polity, their city, their temple, and worship, is at hand, the fatal destruction of Jerusalem is now very near, therefore be ye sober and temperate in all things; watch, that the day of visitation overtake you not unawares, and pray for the averting of God's wrath, and that ye be not overwhelmed in it. Learn hence, That sobriety, watchfulness, and prayer, are very requisite and needful qualifications to prepare and fit persons for every coming and appearance of Christ to judgment; be it his particular coming to some, or his universal coming to all, at the end of the world.

8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

The next grace and virtue exhorted to, is that of charity, or mutual love amongst themselves: and observe with what special care and particular regard it is recommended to us, *above all things*; and note also the intense degree of it, it must not barely, be charity, but *fervent charity*; *Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves.* Learn, That Christians ought to take care, above all things, that their love to one another be sincere and fervent. But how may it be known to be such? *Ans.* If it be active and operative; if we love not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth; if it be not weakened by time; if it be no

hindered by remoteness of place; if it be a sympathizing and compassionate love, a forbearing and forgiving love; then have we *fervent charity among ourselves*. Observe next, The argument or reason to enforce the duty; *for charity shall cover the multitude of sins*. This may be understood two ways: 1. With respect to ourselves: charity, or true love to our brother, will cause us not strictly to take notice of, but silently to overlook and pass by, the faults and failings of others towards and against ourselves. 2. It will cover the sins of others from the eye of the world, and keep us from blazing abroad the infirmities of others, to their prejudice and disgrace: it is both unwarrantable and unsafe to cover the sins of others, either by flattery or falsehood; but to cover a sin by charity, to conceal it from public notice, is a great piece of Christian duty, unless when the concealing of it will do apparent mischief: love looks upon great wrongs as small, and small wrongs as none at all. He must have no friends that will have a friend with no fault, Prov. x. 12. *Hatred stirreth up strife, but love covereth all sins*.

9 Use hospitality one to another, without grudging.

As a principal act and eminent exercise of charity, the apostle advises to *use hospitality* to their poor brethren, *without grudging* or murmuring at the charge: hospitality is a necessary, a commendable, and a commanded duty; St. Paul requires, *Rom. xii. 13, that we be given to hospitality*. Observe farther, the apostle doth not barely say, *use hospitality*, but use it *one to another*: it is a mutual duty; whence it appears, that though hospitality towards the poor be a commanded duty, yet hospitality among the rich is no sin, but a duty likewise, to give reciprocal entertainments; for though our Saviour says, *Luke xiv. 12. When thou makest a dinner, or a supper, call not thy friends and rich neighbours*; the prohibition is not absolute, he doth not forbid the inviting of the rich, but chargeth us not to forget the poor: we may treat both, if we have enough for both; but if not, what we have to spare must be for them that have nothing, not for them that have enough already, for we must prefer works of pious charity before acts of civil courtesy: *Use hospitality one to another without grudging*.

10 As every man hath received the gift, *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

His next exhortation is, That they endeavour rightly to employ, and wisely to im-

prove, their spiritual gifts, (as well as their temporal, mentioned in the foregoing verse,) which they had received for the good and benefit of others in their respective places in the church, looking upon themselves not as proprietors, but as stewards, of the various gifts bestowed upon them by the free favour of God, and of which they must give an impartial account. Learn hence, 1. That several men have their several gifts, as it pleaseth the gift-giving Spirit to give unto them: *As every man has received the gift*. Learn, 2. That gifts are given for the benefit of others, we are to *minister one to another*, that is, to improve our gifts to the mutual edification of each other. Learn, 3. That such as look upon themselves as *stewards of the manifold gifts of God*, will wisely improve them for his glory, and the good of others, the great ends for which he has conferred them.

11 If any man speak, *let him speak as the oracles of God*; if any man minister, *let him do it as of the ability which God giveth*: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

If any man speak, that is, 1. As a public minister or teacher, let him speak as he is instructed from the oracles of God. Or, 2. If he speaks as a private Christian, let his discourses be grave and serious, for mutual edification, especially when he speaks of divine things: speech is a noble and advantageous benefit to man, by which he excels the whole creation; our tongue is our glory, the instrument of our Creator's praise; and there is no subject so sublime and honourable for the tongue of man to be employed about, as the word and oracles of God; but then we must never mention them but with reverence. Woe be to those men that bring forth scripture in their discourse, as the Philistines brought forth Samson, only to make them sport, rendering it the theme of their giddy mirth and profane drollery; but these men ere long will find Almighty God in earnest, though they be in jest; such men forget this injunction of the apostle's, *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*.

—If any man minister,—

To supply the necessities of others, either as a deacon, whose office it then was to take care of the poor, or as a private Christian, by charitable contribution, let him perform that duty readily and cheerfully, *according to the ability God hath*

given him. Where observe, That he that with his wealth ministereth to the necessities of others, if he doth it not according to the ability which God has given him, his charity is not acceptable in God's account; not acceptable to God, because not proportionable to what he has received from God: the reason of this injunction is added in the next words, *That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ*;—in whose strength these gifts are rightly employed, and by whose merits and intercession our intention to glorify God by them is accepted. *To whom*, that is, to which Jesus, as to God blessed for evermore, be all honour and dominion everlastingly ascribed. *Amen.*

12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

Observe here, 1. The metaphor which the apostle uses to set forth the Christian's afflictions and persecutions by; he calls them *fiery trials*: burnings, because very painful and afflictive, very grievous and burdensome to sense, and also because men are tried by them as metals are by fire. Observe, 2. The warning given by the apostle to all Christians, not to think it strange concerning these *fiery trials*; that is, not to look upon them as unusual things, but to expect them, and prepare for them; for unexpected trials fall upon the soul in their full weight, and suddenly overthrow it: what we fear, for that we prepare; but when trials come, and we never looked and prepared for them, they strike us to the heart, because not armed to receive the blow. Observe, 3. The gracious end that God has in the afflictions and persecutions which fall upon his people: *they are to try them*, not to consume them; to try their graces, and destroy their corruptions, to give them opportunity to make proof of the truth of their faith, sincerity, and constancy. Observe, 4. The high honour which God puts upon his suffering saints and servants: they are said to be *partakers of Christ's sufferings*, because they suffer for him, and he suffers with them, and in them, and also because he suffered the same things before them, and much worse things for them. Observe lastly, The duty which God expects and requires from them who suffer these fiery persecutions for the sake of his Son; and

that is, to *rejoice and be exceeding glad*. From the whole learn, 1. That no afflictions or persecutions should seem new or strange things to sincere Christians. 2. That the end and use of all afflictions, is the trial and improvement of the Christian's graces. 3. That believers in suffering afflictions and persecutions, are partakers of Christ's sufferings; he suffers in them, and they are made conformable to him by them. 4. That it is the will of God, that such as suffer for him should not only be meek and patient, but be joyous and cheerful. 5. That at the great day when Christ's glory shall be revealed, then especially will the suffering saints *rejoice and be glad with exceeding joy*, when they shall see their dear Redeemer coming in the clouds, with an human body, shining brighter than ten thousand suns; a body which still retains the marks of his sufferings, and the tokens of his love. O joyful day of Christ's appearing, when this royal bridegroom shall take his suffering spouse the church by the hand, and present her to his Father, own his in the presence of men and angels, bestow a kingdom upon them, that they may be with him where he is, eternally to behold his glory, to feed upon an happiness as large as their capacities, and as lasting as their beings; such honour have all his suffering saints, and therefore ought greatly to *rejoice, inasmuch as they are made partakers of Christ's sufferings*: that when his glory shall be revealed, they may be glad also with exceeding joy.

14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

Another argument is here offered by our apostle for glorifying in sufferings and reproaches for Christ, taken from the happiness of those that are so reproached, *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye*. Note here, That the reproaches which the saints suffer for the sake of Christ, are reckoned persecutions, and yet at the same time are esteemed a part, as well as a prognostic, of their happiness: *Happy are ye, if ye be reproached for the name of Christ*. Observe, 2. The reason assigned why Christians, under reproach for the sake of Christ, are to be esteemed thus happy, namely, because the *Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them*; that is, the glorious Spirit of God, which is both the mean and evidence of your happiness who is glorious in himself, and also a

glory to you, upon whom he rests, and in whom he dwells. Two things are implied by the Spirit *resting* upon a reproached Christian: 1. *Complacency*, that he is well pleased where he is; men do not rest where they do not like. 2. *Permanency*, He abides where he rests, and dwells there with delight. Some take the expression to be an allusion to Noah's dove, that hovered about, but could not rest till returned to the ark. Thus the Spirit of God, called here the *Spirit of glory*, from its effects and fruits, namely, from its cheering, sealing, and reviving influences, which make Christians glory in tribulations; this Spirit flies from place to place, and from person to person, hither and thither, but rests upon and takes up his residence and abode with such Christians as suffer for the name of Christ: *If ye be reproached, &c. happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you*: it follows,—*On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified*; that is, by their reproaches cast upon you, they blaspheme the Holy Spirit, as the word signifies; but he is eminently glorified by your patience and constancy of mind under all your pressures; which shows the power of the Spirit resting upon you, and mightily working in you. Learn hence, That in those reproaches which good men suffer for the sake of Christ, the Spirit of God in a special manner is blasphemed on the one side, and glorified on the other. O sinner! know, that all the reproaches thou castest upon religion and religious persons, as such, reach the Holy Spirit that rests upon them, and resides in them as his temples: but, O Christian, remember thou, that, by thy patience and constancy under sufferings, thou glorifiest the Holy Spirit eminently, abundantly showing that by his help afflictions are not only tolerable but joyous.

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters. 16 Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed: but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Observe here, 1. What it is that the apostle calls upon them to avoid and shun; it is sin, not suffering: evil doing in general, murder and theft in particular, sins that were then very much practised among the Jews: *Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer*; by suffering as evil-doers we lose the comfort and reward of all our sufferings. Observe, 2. What sufferings he bids them not be ashamed of, but glory in, namely, when

they suffer as Christians, and purely as such. *Quest.* But what is it to suffer as a Christian? *Ans.* 1. When we suffer for a good cause. 2. From a Christian principle. 3. In a Christian manner, with meekness, patience, and self-denial. *Quest.* 2. What is it to glorify God on behalf of our sufferings? *Ans.* Afflictions and sufferings, considered barely in themselves, are far from being glorious; but consider them in their cause, as sufferings for righteousness' sake, and so they are glorious; and God honours us greatly, when he calls us forth to suffer, and furnishes us with courage and resolution for sufferings, and it is our duty to give glory to him who enables us thus to do: *If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorify God in this behalf.*

17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

Observe here, 1. The apostle does not say, if judgment begin at the temple of idols, but, *if it begin at the house of God*: God will not spare his house, nor his own household: he will not spare his children or servants when they sin; he is no cockering father, to indulge his children to their ruin. Nay, observe, 2. Judgment first begins at the house of God, God will not bear so long with his own people sinning as with strangers; they shall be corrected sooner and sorer than others; the Lord will first punish them who have been forgetful of him, and trifled with him, who have been formal in their profession, and vain in their conversation. Observe, 3. That when we see with sorrow God contending with his own people for their sins, we may with astonishment expect what will be the end of them that obey not the gospel; when God brings such troubles upon his own house, what troubles may they expect from God, who are but a den of thieves, and a cage of unclean birds! O what appearance shall they have of God! and how shall they appear before God! Observe then, What little cause wicked men have to rejoice at the church's sufferings, when it presages a far more heavy judgment coming upon themselves: for *if judgment begin at the house of God, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel?*

18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

As if he had said, "When the day of

visitation comes, which is verily at hand, and God shall begin to punish the Jews, his own people, called his *house* in the foregoing verse; if then the righteous among them escape the common calamity with great difficulty, and are scarcely preserved, how shall the ungodly and sinners think to escape unpunished in the day of Jerusalem's calamity, that day of vengeance, when Christ shall come to plead with them? If then the righteous be scarcely saved, that is, with great difficulty preserved from that desolating calamity, that fiery trial spoken of, verse 12. *where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?* And how shall they hope to escape in safety from that dreadful judgment now ready to come on the Jewish nation?" There have been those that have made use of this text to show the difficulty of eternal salvation; and that the best and holiest of saints, even those that are most eminent in grace, are very difficultly saved; which, though a truth in itself, yet is scarcely deducible from this text, which certainly speaks of temporal preservation.

19 Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to *him* in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Observe here, 1. A cautionary direction given, that in all our sufferings we take care that we *suffer according to the will of God*: that is, for what is according to God's will, either to be believed or practised by us, for asserting and maintaining the purity of the Christian doctrine and worship; and when our patience under such sufferings is as extensive and intensive as God requires, when our patience is as large and as lasting as our troubles, then may we be said to *suffer according to the will of God*. Observe, 2. The special privilege allowed to such *sufferers as suffer according to the will of God*: they may *commit the keeping of their souls to God in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator*. Learn hence, 1. That when men suffer really and truly for well-doing, they may with confidence and great assurance commit their lives, and all that is dear unto them, to the special care of the divine providence; either God will keep us from, or support us under, trials, when we thus commit ourselves to him.

CHAP. V.

St. Peter closes his epistle with an exhortation to the spiritual guides and governors of the church, to discharge their duties faithfully, in feeding and ruling of the flock of God committed
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to them; and this exhortation is enforced with several weighty arguments in the four first verses of this chapter.

THE elders which are among you
I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

Observe here, 1. The persons exhorted, *The elders that are amongst you*, the guides and governors of the church: elders by age and office, who were both to rule well, and also to labour in the word and doctrine; and for doing both faithfully, were to be *accounted worthy of double honour*. Observe, 2. The person exhorting, *I exhort, who am also an elder*. Mark, he says not, "I who am the universal Head of the church, Christ's vicar upon earth; but I, who am an elder by age, and by apostleship, who have been long the minister of the circumcision, I exhort, beseech, and entreat you, as my brethren, fellow-labourers in our Lord's vineyard." Observe, 3. The humble testimony which St. Peter gives of himself: he doth not say, "I command, who am the chief of the apostles, with whose confession of faith Christ was so well pleased, that he said, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church*;" but, "*I exhort, who am a witness of the sufferings of Christ*, an eye-witness of what our dear Lord and Master suffered in the faithful discharge of his office, both in his life and at his death; and also a *partaker of the glory that shall be revealed*; I was also an eye-witness of Christ's glory in his transfiguration here on earth, and hope to be partaker of that glory which shall hereafter be revealed in heaven." Learn hence, That such exhortations to duty are likely to be most effectual and successful, which are propounded in the humblest manner. St. Peter was placed in an high degree above these elders, being an apostle, a chief apostle; yet he gives himself no such title, but says, *The elders I exhort, who am also an elder*; not an apostle, much less the head and chief of the apostles.

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Observe here, 1. The title given to the church, it is the *flock* of God; denominations are given in scripture to persons and things, proper to the state of things and

persons: thus here the church is called a *flock*, and sometimes a *little flock*, in opposition to the herds and huge droves of the men of the world; yet the flock consists not of a few absolutely, but comparatively only; a flock contains a multitude. Again, as the church is called a flock for their number, so for their order; a flock is under inspection and government continually, Christ Jesus is the great overseer of this flock; and farther, it is a flock in respect of the unity and love that is amongst them; though the church be scattered over the world, yet there is an holy combination and sweet communion of the members amongst themselves. Observe, 2. The duty exhorted to, and that is double, to feed the flock, and to be an example unto the flock. 1. *Feed the flock, taking the oversight of it*; feed it with wholesome doctrine, guide and govern it by strict discipline, overlooking it continually, and watch over it with unwearied diligence; and that you may do so, be perpetually resident, feed the flock that is among you. How can the flock be duly watched over, when the shepherd lives several miles from the fold, and is following his pleasure when he should be feeding his sheep? Feed the flock among you. Observe, 3. The manner directed to, how, and after which, the shepherds should feed and watch over the flocks. 1. *Not by constraint, but willingly*; that is, not as a burthen, but a pleasure, with a free and ready mind; what men do out of compulsion from base fear, they do with no satisfaction either to God or man. 2. *Not for filthy lucre*: to feed the flock purely for the sake of the fleece, and to take a living only to get a living, is an horrid impiety; to be driven into the ministerial office by necessity is bad, but to be drawn by covetousness is much worse. 3. *Not as being lords over God's heritage*. Where note, The title given to the church, they are God's heritage, his people, not our own, his lot and portion, he having a special and peculiar right unto them, and property in them: therefore they are not to be lorded over, not to be treated with insolence and imperiousness, ruling them by the sword, and outward force, which has made many hypocrites, but not one convert. Lastly, He requires that they be ensamples to the flock; that is, in their daily conversation. Now how can they be examples to them, if they live not amongst them? They must be examples of such meekness and humility, of such patience and charity, of such mortification and self-denial, as become persons of their holy character and profession; and be patterns of those virtues amongst their people in conversation

which they recommend to them from the pulpit. This duty of ministerial exemplariness in conversation is bound upon us by innumerable arguments taken from the command of Christ, from the glory of God, from the preciousness of the soul, from the dignity of our office, from the success of our ministry, which depends more upon our practice than upon our preaching; from our own interest, with respect to our present comfort and future happiness; from the influence it has upon our people, an encouraging and confirming influence.

4 And, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

As if our apostle had said, "It is possible you may miss of your reward here from the hands of men; but when Christ, the great and good Shepherd, shall appear, when the owner, ruler, and lover of his church shall come to judgment, you shall have from him your full reward, a never-fading, ever-flourishing crown of glory, for faithfully discharging your duty to God and his people." Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ, the chief Shepherd, will at length appear. 2. That when he doth appear, he will call the under shepherds to account, how they have discharged every part of their ministerial office, as well private inspection, as public preaching. 3. That to all such, and to only such, as have been faithful to the interest of Christ and souls, shall the reward be assigned, even a crown of glory that fadeth not away: When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, &c.

5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another,—

Having laid down the duties of pastors in the former verse, he points out the duties of the people in this, whom he calls the *younger*, either because they were generally younger in years than their spiritual guides, or because they ought to show that reverence and obedience to them which is suitable in young ones towards their elders; these young ones he exhorts to submit themselves to the guidance of their elders and teachers: *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder*; instruction and jurisdiction belonged to the elders, subjection and obedience to the younger. Note here, That the duties of pastor and people are mutual and reciprocal; not that their duties are alike, but because there is a like reason for the performance of their respective duties, a like engagement and obligation upon both: the duty of the one

in subjection; of the other ministerial direction. He adds—*yea, all of you be subject one to another*; intimating thereby that there is a duty of mutual subjection, which all Christians owe one to another in love: they ought to condescend to the meanest offices one towards another; to bear with the infirmities of each other.

—And be clothed with humility: For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

The original word, rendered *clothed*, signifies, first, an upper garment, a frock or cloak, put over all the rest of our clothes; and so imports, that we should be wrapped up all over with this grace, that this should be most visible in our conversations, words, and actions, and conspicuous beyond all other virtues. Secondly, It signifies a belt which girds about our garments, and so imports, that we should tie it fast unto us, and have those considerations always fixed upon our spirits, which may keep us in an humble frame of soul. Note thence, That humility is a special ornament, a beautiful robe, to be put on daily, which commends us greatly both to God and man. We are never to account ourselves dressed, until we have this livery of our humble master Christ Jesus put upon us: *Be clothed with humility*. Observe next, The argument to enforce this duty: *For God resisteth the proud*, sets himself as in battle-array against them, but *giveth* fresh supplies of *grace to the humble*; because more grace is promised to the humble, and the humble soul is more fitted, prepared, and disposed to receive farther measures of grace from God. God sets himself against proud men to bring them down, but the humble he doth countenance and exalt.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

By the *hand of God*, understand his judgments, his almighty power, which it is our duty to submit unto, and to be humble under, in the day of our affliction; and this profound submission and deep humility is the way to glory and exaltation. He can exalt us, and will do it here, if it be good for us: but sometimes God sees abasement better for his people: better, because safer, and accordingly they shall have it. Learn hence, That the strength and power of God should oblige us very greatly to humble ourselves before him, and subject ourselves unto him: *Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God*. Secondly, That God will exalt the humble in due time, either here or hereafter; either in time or

in eternity, as it shall most and best conduce to his own glory and their good.

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Observe here, 1. The nature of the duty enjoined, to cast our care upon God; it is not a providential and prudential care, but an anxious and vexatious care, that the scripture forbids; and the duty here required is this, that after we have used all prudent care and diligence in subserviency to the providence of God, we should not be over-solicitous about the issue and event of things; which, when we have done all we can, will be out of our power. 2. Casting our care upon God implies, that we should refer the issue and event of things to his wise providence, which is continually watching over us, and knows how to dispose of all things for the best advantage to us; entirely confiding in his wisdom and goodness, that he will order all things for the best, and in that confidence resting satisfied with the disposals of his providence, whatever they be. This is to cast all our care upon God. Observe, 2. The argument here made use of to persuade us to this duty: *God careth for us*. This implies also two things: 1. In general, that the providence of God governs the world, and concerns itself in the affairs of men, and disposeth of all events that happen to us. 2. More particularly, that this providence is more peculiarly concerned for good men, and that he takes a special care of them, and of their concerns; and the care that God takes of them is a special care, a tender care, a promised and engaged care, a care mysteriously exercised; he then takes most care of them when they think he takes least, and the men of the world think he takes none at all. Cast we then all our care upon him, who careth for us; for anxious care is a painful evil, an unprofitable evil, a sinful evil.

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9 Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

Observe here, 1. A double duty exhorted to, sobriety and vigilancy: *Be sober, be vigilant*, be sober and temperate in all things: sober in your enjoyments; sober in your employments; sober in your recreations. Be neither drunk with wine, nor worldly cares; the latter is the worst of the two

A night's sleep cures the former, but the worldling is drunk all the year long, never sober night nor day. And to sobriety we are exhorted to add vigilancy, a watchful care and diligent circumspection over all our thoughts, words, and actions, that we may not displease God in any thing, *Be sober, be vigilant.* Observe, 2. The reason or motive to enforce the duty, *Because your adversary the devil, goeth about, &c.* Where note, How every word contains a special motive to Christian watchfulness. He is your adversary, who will do you all possible mischief: he is the devil, an accuser, and one that seeks all advantages against you; he is a cruel adversary, *a lion*, yea, a *roaring lion*, which adds terror to his cruelty: he is a restless adversary, *He goes about seeking whom he may devour*; what soul he may devour, for that's the bait he gapes for. It grieves the devils, those apostate angels, to find the souls of men appointed to fill up those vacant places in heaven, which they turned themselves out of. It is a delight to them to plunge souls into the same condemnation and misery with themselves. Observe, 3. The duty of resistance, urged upon us in order to our preservation, with the weapon put in our hand for that purpose: *Whom resist, steadfast in the faith*; that is, be steadfast in your faith, that you may resist him: and by the help of your faith you shall overcome him. Learn hence, 1. That the devil is the restless adversary and unwearied enemy of mankind. 2. That all the pains which Satan takes is, in order to the destruction of precious souls. 3. That the way to overcome him is by resisting of him, not by yielding to him: he is a cowardly enemy, and a conquered enemy; resist him, and he will run. 4. That faith is the weapon by which the Christian is enabled to resist the tempter, and to repel the force of his fiery temptations.

9 Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

As if the apostle had said, "Resist Satan's temptations, occasioned by your sufferings, remembering that it is not your case alone, but others also suffer with you, even all that will live godly in Christ Jesus." Learn hence, That Christians should not desire, and cannot reasonably expect, a better condition in the world, with respect to freedom from sufferings, than the rest of their brethren, who have all a share of affliction to suffer, and a measure of hardship to endure, as well as ourselves: The

same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. 11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Our apostle concludes and closes his epistle with an affectionate prayer for these afflicted Christians and suffering saints, beseeching Almighty God, who is the author of all grace, and who hath called them by his gospel, to the participation of that grace, which will entitle them to eternal glory, that, after they have suffered a while in the world, he would perfect the work of grace begun in them, establish, strengthen, and settle them, in the truth of the gospel; and to this infinitely gracious God he desires glory and dominion should be for ever ascribed. Observe here, 1. That God is the God of all grace; seed, growth, and perfection, all from him; restraining grace, renewing grace, sanctifying grace, all from the fountain of all grace. Observe, 2. That serious Christians are called by God to eternal glory and happiness: they are called to the hope and expectation of this glory, upon the account of the promise of it which God made to Christ, *Tit. i. 2.* and they are brought into a state of preparation for it; God hath by his word and Spirit wrought them for this same thing. Observe, 3. They are called to eternal glory through Christ Jesus; he reveals it to them, he purchases it for them, he works that faith and repentance in them which qualifies them for, and entitles them unto, this heavenly glory. Observe, 4. That some afflictions must be expected and endured by all Christians, how dear to God soever they are or may be. Was there any patriarch, prophet, or apostle, primitive or modern Christian, that did not suffer a while? Saints must suffer a while from the remains of sin, from the temptations of Satan, from the enemies of religion, and from the friends of religion, yea, from God himself, their best friend. Observe, 5. That after serious Christians have suffered a while, they shall enter into glory: their title is sure by the promise of God, by the purchase of Christ, by the inhabitation of the Spirit. Observe, 6. That the perfecting, establishing, strengthening, of the Christian in grace and comfort, is from God, to whom all glory and dominion is and ought for ever to be ascribed.

12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother

unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God, wherein ye stand.

Observe here, That our apostle, to encourage these suffering Christians to a resolved perseverance in the Christian religion, assures them that it was undoubtedly from God, the unquestionable truth of God, and therefore neither seducers on the one hand, nor persecutors on the other, should be able to shake them, or cause them to fall from their own steadfastness; a firm belief of the certainty and excellency of Christianity conduces much to the establishment of those that have newly embraced it; if we be once assured that it is the true grace of God wherein we stand, it will cause us to stand steadfast.

13 The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.
14 Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

At the foot of this epistle he sends them salutations from the Christians at Babylon, who were chosen out of the world, to partake in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. Some, by Babylon, figuratively understand Rome, but others understand it of Babylon in Assyria, where many Jews did tarry, and continue after the expiration of the seventy years' captivity, whom St. Peter, being a minister of the circumcision, went to visit, having probably planted a church there. Wheresoever they were, God had called them to the knowledge of his gospel, and they send salutations to all their brethren and fellow-members in Christ, wheresoever dispersed, or howsoever distressed. As also doth Mark, whom St. Peter calls his son, because instructed by him in the gospel, and begotten by him to Christianity. Lastly, he exhorts them to express their fervent affection to each other by a kiss of charity, used in the primitive times as a token of love amongst Christians; but afterwards, for just reasons, laid aside; so wishing peace, that is, all manner of prosperity, to all in Christ Jesus, that is, to all professing faith in Christ Jesus, he shuts up his epistle.

THE
SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL
OF
S T. P E T E R.

The Second Epistle of St. Peter was written by him a little before his death, he having received a revelation, probably, of his approaching departure out of this life; he writes this second letter to the Jews of the dispersion scattered through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, to warn them of the fiery trial, that sharp and bitter persecution, which was coming upon them, and to fortify them against that apostasy from the faith, that falling from their own steadfastness, that departing from the holy commandment, which these newly converted Jews were very prone unto; he sends therefore this Epistle to establish and settle them, to strengthen and confirm them; and this is the last mention which we find in scripture of this great and glorious apostle.

CHAP. I.

SIMON PETER, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. The author and penman of this epistle, described by his name, *Simon Peter*, the former given at his circumcision, the latter by Christ, upon the occasion of his confession, *Matt. xvi. 18*; by his condition, *a servant*; by his office, an *apostle*; by the author of his office, *Jesus Christ*. Here note, That Christ only has an authoritative power to make apostles, ministers, and dispensers of his word: a derivative power from Christ the governors of his church have: but such as have not now their call from Christ immediately, (which it is presumption to expect, and if any pretend to it, let them show it by their miracles,) or mediately from the officers of his church, are usurpers of the sacred office, and they cannot pray in faith themselves for a blessing upon what they do, nor can the people expect it, *Jer. xxiii. 32. I never sent them, (says God,) therefore they shall not profit this people at all.* Observe, 2. The persons described to whom this epistle is directed, *To them that have obtained like precious faith with us.* To such as had

obtained faith, precious faith, like precious faith with the apostle of Christ; *like*, for its nature and quality, though not for its measure and degree; and *alike precious*, in regard of its object, Christ; in regard of its subject, the heart; in regard of its act, which is acceptance and consent to the terms of the gospel covenant; in regard of its effects and precious fruits, *peace* with God, *peace* with conscience, victory over the world and the like. We see then that the faith of the poorest believer is as precious as the richest, and that the weakest believer has the same precious faith with the strongest; and if it be alike precious, it shall be alike permanent and preserving. Observe, 3. The meritorious cause of this their precious faith, the righteousness of Jesus Christ: *through the righteousness of God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ.* All grace is derived to us through Christ, for the sake of his righteousness, sufferings, and satisfaction; and as all grace is derived from him, and for his sake conferred, so all our good, that little service we do for God, is accepted through him, and owned for his sake. And is so, then Jesus Christ is really God; for the righteousness of a creature cannot justify me in the sight of God; there is no appearing before God for any creature in a creature-righteousness. And farther, If so, then it is not faith that justifies and saves, but the righteousness

of Christ, upon which faith is grounded, Eph. ii. 8. *By grace ye are saved*, effectually, *through faith instrumentally*. The brazen serpent healed not the eye that looked on it; yet without looking upon it, no help from it, no healing by it.

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.

The person saluting, and the parties saluted, were mentioned in the former verse; here we have the salutation itself: 1. The matter of it, *grace and peace*; grace to free us from God's wrath, and reinstate us in his favour; peace to quiet our own consciences, and reconcile us to ourselves. Observe, 2. The measure of it, *grace and peace be multiplied*; they had both grace and peace already, yet the apostle prays for the farther increase of them; there is no complete perfection in grace attainable in this life. The best of saints must be multiplying and increasing their stores; for they are but imperfectly perfect when at the best. Observe, 3. The means for multiplying grace and peace; *through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord*. Learn, That the knowledge of God, in, by, and through, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the special mean of multiplying grace and peace in our hearts: and indeed there is no comfortable knowledge of God, but in and through Christ, John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal, &c.* Out of Christ God is a revenger; in Christ, a reconciled father.

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

In these words our apostle shows what reason they had to believe and hope that *grace and peace* should be multiplied unto them, namely, because Almighty God had already given them all things which conduced to make them holy in this life, and happy in the next, by the knowledge of Christ. Others, by *life and godliness*, understand all things conducing to the preservation of natural life, likewise of grace here, and glory hereafter; and whereas it is said they were *called to glory and virtue*: by *glory* understand the honour of being Christians; by *virtue*, the good life that becomes Christians. To both these they were called with a glorious calling, as being attended with the glorious effusion of the Holy Ghost. If by *glory and virtue*, be understood grace here, and glory hereafter, it shows our privilege, that we have both at present in a

way of inchoation, and shall ere long enjoy both in a way of consummation: and it points out also to us our duty: we must have virtue, if we would have glory; if we be not like Christ, we can never love him, nor may we ever expect to live with him.

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Whereby, or *by whom*, that is, through the knowledge of Christ in the gospel, God has given to us all things conducing to our present and future happiness, and, amongst the rest, the precious promises of the gospel, which so directly tend to make men partakers of the divine nature. Note here, That the promises of the gospel are the Christian's great and precious treasure; greatness and goodness are then most shining, when they meet in the same subject, but such a glorious conjunction is rarely found, either in persons, or things; rarely are great men good, or good men great; pebbles are great, but not precious; pearls are precious but not great. But the promises are both for quantity exceeding great, for quality exceeding precious: and that in respect of the author of them, *God*; the foundation of them, *the blood of Christ*; the manner of their dispensation, they are freely given; the means whereby they are apprehended and applied, *precious faith*; and *exceeding precious* the promises are in regard of the end of them, which is to make us partakers of the divine nature, (not of the essence, but qualities, of the divine nature,) which enables us, in some measure, to resemble God: as the seal doth communicate its signature, but not its substance; so in the work of regeneration God doth not impart his essence, but infuse holy principles and gracious habits into the soul, whereby the Christian resembles him. Learn hence, That the great end and effect of the promises, and the proper influence and efficacy which they ought to have upon the hearts and lives of men, is this, to make them partakers of the divine nature, and to render them daily more like unto God: *Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*. Here note, 1. That the world is full, very full, of corruption, sin and temptation; by reason of the lust of men, they rub the leprosy upon each other; and, by the contagion of a bad example, infect and poison one another. Note, 2. That by being made partakers of the divine nature, through the influence of

the promises, we escape the pollution of fleshly lusts, which the world is defiled with, and would defile us by.

5 And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

The apostle spends the former part of the chapter in comforting, this in exhorting; he told us before what God had done for us; he tells us now what we must do for ourselves: it is not fit that heaven should take all the pains, and we none; we must give diligence, all diligence. *Beside this*, that is, besides what God has given us, and done for us, let us take care to be daily adding to our stock and store. Adding to our faith, *virtue*; that is, all good works in general, without which faith is dead, or dying; and fortitude, or holy courage, in doing our duty in particular. To virtue, *knowledge*; that is, a more exact knowledge of your duty, and a farther increase in it; for knowledge is the light, without which the Christian cannot see to do his work. And to knowledge must be added *temperance*, which subdues the violence of our unruly passions and appetites, and does reduce those rebellious powers under the government and dominion of reason and religion. And to temperance, *patience* under all wrongs and sufferings whatsoever; an impatient man under affliction is like a bedlamite in chains, raving against God and man. To patience, *godliness*, a conscientious regard to all the duties of the first table; let the fear of God restrain you from sin, the love of God constrain you to duty. And to godliness, *brotherly kindness*, or a fervent love to all Christians, as being our brethren, and fellow-members in Christ, and this for grace's sake. And to brotherly kindness, *charity*; that is, to all mankind, as proceeding from the same stock, having the same nature, and subject to the same necessities with ourselves; let there be found with you a desire and endeavour to do all the possible good you can to every one. Learn and observe from the whole, That there is a concatenation both of graces and duties, they must not be separated, they will not live single: where there is one grace in sincerity, there is a constant care to secure all the rest; and where a Christian, for conscience sake, performs one duty, he will make conscience of all the rest; the

duties of both tables are religiously observed, both as an argument of his sincerity, and as an ornament to his holy profession:

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

To encourage Christians to grow and improve in the fore-mentioned virtues and graces, our apostle here lays before us, I. The great advantage of such a proficiency and growth, *If these things be in you, and abound*, that is, the fore-mentioned graces, they will both cause you and evidence you not to be barren and unfruitful in your profession of Christianity and faith in Christ; the exercises of divine graces are the best evidences of our being made partakers of the divine nature. Observe, 2. The miserable estate of those whose faith is not fruitful in good works: *He that lacketh these things*, that is, who doth not live in the exercise of the fore-mentioned graces, is spiritually blind, and really destitute of that knowledge which he pretends to, blinded by his passions and lusts, and sensual affections, and sees not the great end and design of Christianity, forgetting that in baptism he solemnly vowed all this, and that he was sacramentally washed from his old sins.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

As if our apostle had said, "See that in the diligent exercise of the fore-named graces, and in the daily practice of the fore-mentioned duties, you make your calling and election, which are sure in themselves, sure to you; for so doing, you shall never fall or miscarry eternally." Here note, That it is their own calling and election which Christians are called upon to make sure, not another's; we must leave their cases and estate to God that searches the heart; we cannot know the hearts of others, it is well if we know our own: *Make your calling and election sure*. Learn, 1. A Christian may be assured of his own salvation. 2. Assurance of salvation requires all diligence. 3. That assurance of salvation deserves all diligence. 4.

That the way to make our election sure, is first to make our calling sure.

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There are four sorts of persons spoken of in scripture: 1. Some are said to be far from the kingdom of God, as far off from God, as heathen and infidels, who know not God. 2. Others are said not to be far from the kingdom of God. *Mark xii. 34.* who yet will never come there. 3. Others are scarcely saved, saved with great difficulty, so as by fire, with much dross of error in judgment, and corruption in life. 4. Others are said to have an abundant entrance administered to them into the everlasting kingdom; and these are the fruitful Christians, who are daily adding to their graces, and going from strength to strength; these shoot the gulf of death in the holy triumph of their grace; they enter the harbour of heaven with a plerophory, a full sail, with a full assurance of faith and hope. Thus will the fruitful Christian have both a more comfortable passage to, and also a more ample reward in, heaven.

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth. 13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting *you* in remembrance: 14 Knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. 15 Moreover, I will endeavour, that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

Observe here, 1. The persons to whom the apostle gave the foregoing exhortation to progressiveness and proficiency in holiness: they were knowing persons, yea, established persons, they were both informed and confirmed in the truth; but were they knowing, yet they wanted farther information; were they established, yet might want farther confirmation. It is a very dangerous notion some have taken up, that a Christian in this life may live above ordinances, and outgrow counsels and exhortations, as if he need not hear, or pray or the like. St. Peter thought otherwise; these were grown Christians to whom he writes, yet he tells them three several times

together here, in four verses, that he would not be negligent to put them in remembrance, even of those things which they knew already. Observe, 2. The exemplary diligence and industry of the apostle in his ministerial work, together with his constancy therein: *as long as I am in this tabernacle*, that is, as long as I live in this world, I will endeavour to keep the heavenly flame of love and zeal burning very lively upon the altar of your hearts. Observe, 3. The motive or consideration provoking him to this diligence; and that is, the certainty of his approaching dissolution, *I must shortly put off this tabernacle, as my Lord hath shewed me*. Where note, 1. He calls his body a tabernacle, in regard of its moveableness and frailty, and in opposition to that house made without hands, eternal in the heavens. Note, 2. How familiarly our apostle speaks of death, *I must put off this tabernacle*; he makes no more of putting off his body by death, than a man does of putting off his clothes at night. Note, 3. The necessity of putting off the body, *I must; I may, and I must shortly*: intimating, that how strong soever the affections and inclinations of souls are to the fleshly tabernacles they now live in, yet they must put them off, and that speedily. Note, 4. How the consideration of the certainty and suddenness of St. Peter's removal by death did excite and provoke him to the utmost industry and diligence in his ministerial work where he lived; the apprehensions of approaching death must quicken to utmost diligence. Lastly, That ministers must never give over pressing known truths as long as they live, that their people may have them in remembrance after their decease: *I will endeavour that after my decease you may have these things always in remembrance*.

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Our apostle comes now to exhort them to constancy in the faith of the gospel, assuring them that himself and his fellow.

apostles had not followed artificially-devised fables, when they made known to them the coming of Christ in the flesh, and that he was truly, and in very deed, the promised Messiah, for that he himself, with James and John, were with Christ upon Mount Tabor as eye-witnesses of his transfiguration, where and when he received in his human nature a communicated splendour, and God the Father from heaven, the seat of the magnificent glory, pronounced him to be his well-beloved Son, in whom he is well-pleased. Learn hence, That God the Father's testimony from heaven concerning his Son Jesus Christ, did effectually bring honour and glory unto Christ, and is a great obligation upon us to faith and obedience to him: *He received from God the Father honour and glory*, attesting him to be his well-beloved Son. Learn, 2. That there was as much assurance given of the certainty of Christ's being the promised Messiah, and of the truth of the evangelical doctrine, as the world could reasonably desire: men can humanly be certain of nothing more than what they receive by their senses, which are the proper judges of all sensible objects; now no satisfaction of this kind was wanting to the world concerning our blessed Saviour and his miracles; the apostles attesting what they had heard, what they had seen with their eyes, and their hands had handled of the word of life, 1 John i. 1.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts:

Observe here, That the scriptures, or written word of God, are a more sure word to us than any voice from heaven, or revelation whatsoever; not that there was any uncertainty in the Lord's voice uttered from heaven at Christ's transfiguration, but because that transient voice was heard only by three, and might be mistaken or forgotten; whereas the holy scriptures are a standing and authentic record, and a most sure ground for faith to build upon; and accordingly our apostle tells them, they should do well to attend unto the written word, that is, the scriptures of the Old Testament, as unto a light that shined in that dark time, till by considering those ancient prophecies, and comparing them with what Christ hath done and suffered, they might find the day dawning upon them, and the morning star, the Holy Spirit, arising in their hearts, so enlightening and convinc-

ing them, that no more doubts or scruples should be left in them concerning this great truth, attested by a voice from heaven, and confirmed by the writings of the prophets, namely that Jesus is the true and promised Messiah, and really the Son of God. Learn hence, That the written word of God is a surer word, more to be depended and relied upon, than any voice from heaven, though attested by the greatest and most eminent apostle, and consequently to be more heeded and regarded by us: nay, farther, the sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit in and upon the hearts and lives of sincere and serious Christians, is a more certain and indubitable evidence of their salvation, than if an angel should come from heaven on purpose to tell them that they should certainly come thither; for the testimony of an angel, at the highest, is but the testimony of a creature; but the testimony of the sanctifying Spirit is the testimony of God himself; it is therefore the *sure word* that we are to attend unto; and that revelation of God's will, being final, is, and ought to be attended to, before any pretended or real revelations whatsoever: *We have a more sure word of prophecy: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, &c.*

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

These words are understood variously. 1. Some interpret them thus: That no part of holy scripture was written by any private impulse, incitation, or motion, by no suggestion of men's own private spirits, but they gave out to us what the Holy Ghost gave in to them; nor did their prophecy according to the *will of man*, that is, when they would, or what they would, but they spake by the instinct and impulse of the Holy Ghost. The words show what authority the penmen of the holy scriptures had to write what they did, and why we should be so careful to take heed to what they wrote. Learn hence, That it is a very great principle, yea, one of the first principles of our faith, that the scriptures are the very word and will of God, written not by any private spirit, but dictated by the Spirit of God, and consequently are no part of them of human invention, but all of divine inspiration, for which reason great respect is due to them, and *we shall do well to take heed to them.* 2. Others un-

derstand the words thus: That no prophecy of scripture is to be expounded as speaking only of those persons whom the speaker first intended and meant, according to the speaker's private thought, for the holy men of God were moved by God's Spirit to speak those words which signified more than they designed, or always meant and understood themselves; as for instance David often speaks in the psalms words true of himself and Solomon, but the Holy Ghost pointeth at Christ, who was typified by those persons; and whether David meant more than himself and Solomon, it is certain the Holy Ghost meant more; so if Josiah be meant in *Isa. liii.* as some would have it, it is evident that he was but typical, and that the Holy Ghost meant Christ and his sufferings ultimately: so that it is plain that the scripture prophecy receives its full sense from the Spirit, and not from the speaker; and must not be appropriated narrowly to those private men by whom, or of whom, they were proximately meant by the speaker. 3. Others understand the words after this manner, namely, that no private person must take upon him the interpretation of holy scriptures, but refer all to the church. Hence Estius infers, "That the reformed and their pastors must not interpret the scriptures, but the catholic church only." To which we reply, that as no private persons, so likewise no church, may presume to interpret scripture according to their own mind, nor make their private sense to be the sense of scripture, but to seek understanding from God, who shows the meaning of the word by the word, (comparing scripture with scripture,) and by his Spirit leads good men into the knowledge and understanding of it; "knowing this that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but the men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

CHAP. II.

Our apostle, in the latter end of the foregoing chapter, recommended the holy scriptures to us as our guide and rule, as our card and compass by which we should steer our Christian course; he tells us, that the holy prophets under the Old Testament were men divinely inspired, and what they wrote was by the special direction of the Holy Ghost; he comes now to declare and foretell in this chapter, the coming in of false prophets and teachers, that would pervert the truth of doctrine, by bringing in damnable heresies; and he sets forth their manners; also they walk according to their own lusts: monstrous doctrines are usually accompanied with monstrous lusts, and strong delusions with vile affections.

BUT there were false prophets also among the people, even as there

shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

Observe here, How the apostle foretells the coming of false teachers into the gospel church, as there had been false prophets in the Jewish church: no age of the church ever was or will be free of them; but the run of the last times is most likely to have most of these sour dregs. *There shall be false teachers among you:* false teachers then may find a scripture prophecy for their being in the church, but they will hardly find a scripture warrant for their being there. Observe, 2. The doctrines which they will teach: and they are *damnable heresies*. Where note, That Almighty God never intended a certain remedy against heresy, any more than he did against sin and vice; it is certain, that there is no certain and effectual remedy against either of them; God does what he sees best and fittest, not what we think to be so. Note also, That infallibility itself is no effectual remedy against heresy; the apostles were certainly infallible, and yet they could neither prevent nor extinguish heresy, which never more abounded than in the apostles' times; St. Paul says, *there must be heresies*, 1 Cor. i. 19. St. Peter here says, *that there shall be false teachers*. Now, if there must be heresies and false teachers, either the church is not infallible, or infallibility is no effectual remedy against heresy. Observe, 3. That Christ is here called the Lord that bought these men who brought destruction upon themselves, *Denying the Lord that bought them*; because none should perish for want of a sufficient sacrifice for sin, Christ by his blood purchased for them pardon and life to be theirs, upon condition of believing acceptance. Observe lastly, As the *seeds-men, false-teachers*, and the seed they sow, *damnable heresies*, so the crop they shall reap, and that is, *swift destruction*: as *damnable heresies* are brought in privily, so the blasphemous heretic, the seducing heretic, the seditious heretic, brings upon himself swift destruction; sometimes temporal destruction in this world, certainly eternal, without repentance, in the next.

2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

As if the apostle had said, "Notwithstanding heretics bring such fatal destruction upon themselves, yet many that profess Christianity shall be seduced by them,

and follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the enemies of religion will speak evil of it, and the professors of it. Observe here, 1. The thriving and growth of heresies, *Many shall follow their pernicious ways.* Where note, The nature of error, it is pernicious and destructive; and the efficacy of error, not a few, but *many*, are in danger of being perverted by it. Observe, 2. The sad sequel or fruits of this, *By reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of.* Here note, 1. The title given to the Christian religion; it is the way of truth, so styled from its parentage and original, the *God of truth*; in regard of its efficacy, it *works* truth in the inward parts, and because it brings those that embrace and practise it to the enjoyment of him who is the God of truth. Note, 2. The coarse usage which religion meets with from many in the world; it is blasphemed or evil spoken of by persons following seducers, *By reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of.* It is no new or unusual thing for religion, and the sincere professors of it, to be traduced and slandered by heretical seducers and false teachers.

3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

Observe here, 1. What is the root of all heresy: it is *covetousness*, which the apostle calls the root of all evil; they are covetous, worldly-minded men generally, who hope some way or other to make an advantage of their opinions, who broach errors and false doctrines. Observe, 2. The miserable condition of the seduced: they are sold by heretics like beasts, *They make merchandise of you.* The business of heretics is to sell their own and others' souls, as Judas did Christ, for some outward benefit. Observe, 3. The arts which heretics and seducers use to circumvent and deceive, and that is feigned words, artificially composed to seduce, drawing into error with a deceitful eloquence. Observe, 4. The dreadful punishment which attends their sin; *swift destruction: Their damnation slumbereth not; their judgment lingereth not.* Learn, That the righteous judgment of God brings damnation upon the wicked, and their damnation will come swiftly, very swiftly upon them.

4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judg-

ment; 5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly:

Our apostle having asserted, in the foregoing verse, that the judgment of the wicked in general lingereth not, and that the damnation of seducers in particular slumbereth not, he comes here in these verses to make his assertion good by a threefold instance, namely, the *angels, the old world, and the people of Sodom and Gomorrha*: from whence he would have them conclude, that if God spared not these, he would not long spare false prophets and their followers. Observe, 1. The example of God's severity on the fallen angels; they sinned and kept not their first state, they fell from that state of holiness in which they were originally created; and their punishment followed, they were cast down to hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, reserved unto judgment. But are they not judged and punished already? Yes, no doubt, but the full wrath of God will not be poured out upon them till the day of judgment; if they are now as full of sin as they can be, it is certain they are not so full of misery and torment as they shall be. Learn hence, 1. That the angels, though created in an holy, yet are they not in an immutable, state. 2. The freedom of their own wills was the cause of their sin, and their sin the cause of their misery. 3. That for sin they were cast down to hell, where their misery is much, but they expect more. Observe, 2. The example of the old world, upon whose sinning God brought a flood, drowning them all except eight persons. Where note, that the greatest multitude and number of sinners does not hinder God's justice from executing judgment upon them for their sins; a whole world sinning are as easily destroyed by God as a single sinner. Observe, 3. He instances in the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, who were consumed by fire from heaven, and rendered by the Almighty a dreadful spectacle to all that should live ungodly. Sin lays the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing cities and kingdoms: the strongest walls cannot keep judgments out, when sin enters in; Sodom's plenty and power could not secure

her inhabitants, when sin had once exposed them to the wrath of God. Note also, The intention, end, and design of God, in punishing some sinners; it is to make them examples unto others.

7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds.)

Observe here, 1. As bad as Sodom was, it had a good man in it; God leaves not himself without witness; in the vilest and worst of places God has some that profess his name, and bear witness to his truth. Observe, 2. The character given of him, *just Lord*; the denomination was taken from the habitual frame of his heart, and the general tenor of his life. Observe, 3. How this good man laid to heart the wickedness of Sodom; he was grieved for their wicked and filthy conversation before God, more than for their unkind and cruel behaviour towards him: the spirit of a child of God is a sympathizing spirit, it sadly lays to heart both the sins and the sufferings of others. Observe, 4. The care that God took for this good man's preservation: *he delivered just Lot*; he delivered him both from the company and conversation of the wicked, which was a continual vexation to him; and also delivered him from the judgments which were righteously brought upon the wicked: *And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.*

9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.

From the particular example of Lot, and his gracious preservation in Sodom's destruction, the apostle draws this general conclusion, "That Almighty God knows how to preserve his own faithful servants from the evil of temptations and trials, which they here meet with in the world, and from the world, and can and will reserve the wicked to the day of judgment to be punished. Note here, 1. That the Lord has a perfect and exact knowledge both of the righteous and the wicked, and of their several ways and doings. 2. That God knoweth many ways how to deliver the righteous, but (considering the tenor of his revealed will) he knoweth no way how to deliver the wicked, they having

refused all ways of his appointment for their own deliverance. 3. That although the wicked sometimes escape trouble, yet they are never delivered from it; all their preservations from evil are but reservations for future and farther evil; the wicked are not so much preserved from, as reserved unto, future wrath: thus we see how Almighty God very well knows how to perform all those things which he has promised to the godly, and threatened to the wicked: *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly, but reserveth the wicked, &c.*

10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government: presumptuous *are they*, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities:

As if the apostle had said, "Though God reserves all wicked men to punishment, yet especially heretics and seducers, who second their corrupt doctrine with a wicked conversation, such as *walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness.*" Here note, That heretics are frequently unclean persons; monstrous opinions and vile affections accompany one another; such as oppose the faith are flesh-defilers. Note farther, That seducers are opposers of civil government and dominion: *they despise government, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.* Some think the dignities here intended were the angels, others the apostles, but most understand it of civil rulers: it is a very heinous sin in the sight of God to despise government, and oppose rulers.

11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.

That is, "Whereas the blessed angels, who have more power than men, when they plead against devils themselves, do it not by railing accusation." Note here, That angels are far superior to men in dignity and power. 2. That purity of affection does accompany angelical illumination; as the angels are above us, so are they the patterns of holiness to us. 3. They are eminently so with respect to the government of their passions; when they contend with devils themselves, it is without disturbance, without railing accusations. It is our duty to learn this angelical lesson, of forbearing railing accusations, not to return evil for evil, but being defamed, to entreat: we are to be as just to another's reputation as our own; they that handle the names of others rudely, must

expect their own will be, at one time or other, handled as roughly; nothing is more just with God, than to suffer others to open their mouths against those who will open their own mouths against others.

12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not: and shall utterly perish in their own corruption:

Observe here, What our apostle compares these heretical seducers to, and sets them forth by, brute beasts. 1. Because their minds run after sensual objects violently and impetuously, and they know no measure in the using of them; like swine, they wallow over head and ears in the mud of their sensual lusts. And, 2. They were also as secure as the brute beasts; they mock at the denunciation of God's judgment, saying, *Where is the promise of his coming?* Seducers are perfect sensualists: it is a righteous thing with God to leave them to be governed by sense, who will not be guided by grace; they would not be saints, and at length they cease to be men; but, like brutes, fall into the ditch of beastly sensuality. O Christian! beg of God that thy grace may be true and supernatural; for if it be only in appearance, and doth not arise to true sanctity, it may soon degenerate and sink down into sensual bestiality. In a word, 3. They are to perish, and to be destroyed like brute beasts; all seek to destroy them for their hurtfulness, but these moral beasts destroy themselves: sensual seducers *perish in their own corruptions*; in their natural corruptions, by their luxury and intemperance, bringing diseases and death upon their bodies; in their civil corruptions, overthrowing their families, by swallowing down their estates; yea, they corrupt themselves eternally, destroying body and soul by their excess. Lord! how will the fatted glutton (without repentance) fry in hell! how dismal a recompense will a sea of brimstone be for a river of wine! They who are drowned in profuseness, shall certainly be drowned in perdition.

13 And shall they receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day-time. spots *they are* and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while they feast with you; 14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin: beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have

exercised with covetous practices; cursed children;

Here we have many sad and dreadful instances given of the height of sensuality and brutishness which these seducers were arrived at, and had attained unto. Lord! how do fleshly lusts and sensual affections obscure the light of conscience, and corrupt its judgment! There is such an intimate communion between the soul and the body, that they interchangeably corrupt one another. To what a desperate degree of hardness and insensibility had the flames of lust seared the consciences of these men: They had lost all the ingenuous bashfulness of human nature, and pleased themselves in their licentious principles and practices, not declining to do that at noon-day which heathens would have blushed to be found doing at midnight. Observe particularly, How luxury and uncleanness accompany each other; they took pleasure in *rioting and sporting* themselves in their feasts, and their eyes were full of *adultery*. They feasted and fed immeasurably, impurely, and lustfully, making their plenty fodder and fuel for their lusts; for having fed to the full, every one neighed after his neighbour's wife, and putting out the candles after supper, they gave way promiscuously to the ravings of unbridled lust, turning the temple of the Holy Ghost into an *hog-sty*. But know, O unclean sinner! that God will return flames for flames, and revenge the fire in thy heart with the fire of hell. How nearly does it concern thee, who has burnt in these impure flames of uncleanness, and kindled the flames of God's wrath, to labour to cool and quench them with the blood of Christ, and the tears of repentance, which alone can allay the heats of sin in thee, and of wrath in God! Let unclean sinners improve examples, lest they be made examples.

15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet.

Our apostle, having charged these men with insatiable lust in the former verse, proceeds next to tax them with insatiable covetousness in this verse, declaring, that this sin had diverted them from the right way of truth and godliness, and caused them to imitate Balaam of old, whose love

of honour and wealth so blinded his eyes, that the ass he rode upon could see beyond him, whose mouth God miraculously opened to rebuke the madness of the prophet. Note here, 1. How the wicked in after-ages do in their courses and practices imitate such wicked persons as lived before them in former ages: these men follow the way of Balaam, imitate his covetousness and insatiable desire of wealth. Note, 2. That as it is the nature of all sin to carry men out of the way, so covetousness in particular will carry a man astray, and put him upon the practice of any wickedness: it neither fears nor forbears any sinful course to attain its end; they that will be rich meet with many enticements unto sin, and they will not fear to embrace any enticement. Nay, verily, a thirst after gain will make a man thirst after blood, to get gain. Witness Balaam and Judas, who were both covetous and bloody. Covetousness is oftentimes the cause of uncleanness. How many, for the sake of money, have violated their matrimonial faith, allured more with the adulterer's purse than his person. Let no person hope to escape any sin that embraces this one sin. Note, 3. What a mighty struggle there sometimes is in a natural man's conscience concerning sin. The light of Balaam's conscience made him refuse the wages of unrighteousness, and speak honourably: *If Balak would give me his house full of gold and silver, I cannot, &c.* but at the same time lust in his heart led him forth strongly to desire it. *He loved the wages of unrighteousness*: loved it, but durst not touch it. Note, 4. How extremely, yea, brutishly mad, such men are upon their lusts, who will not be rebuked or stopped in their progress of impiety without a miracle. Balaam's running was so greedy, and his march so furious, that he had cursed the people, had not the angel stopped him, and the ass spoken to him. Little thanks to a resolute sinner that he does not rush on, when the arm of Omnipotency pulls him back. O let the heart-changing power of the grace of God influence us to good, as well as his almighty arm restrain us from evil, or we are miserable.

17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

Still our apostle succeeds in characterizing and describing these seducers, which were then amongst them. He described them before by their luxury and licentiousness, by their incontinency and unclean-

ness, by their insatiableness and covetousness; now he proceeds to discover their vanity and emptiness. They pretended indeed to be deep fountains of saving knowledge, but like wells without water; and to be clouds containing abundance of rain, for the watering of the church, whereas they were like clouds carried about with a tempest of pride and ambition, from one vicious doctrine and practice to another, darkening the church; for whom, by the just judgment of God, is reserved the *blackness of darkness for ever*. Note here, 1. The ministers of the gospel ought to be as wells, for depth of knowledge, for purity of doctrine, for residency or fixedness of abode; every one knows where the town-well stands: though ministers are wells of clay, yet should they be always full of the water of life, and always at hand for the people to have recourse unto. Note, 2. The ministers of Christ must be full and watery clouds, able and apt to teach, able to open scriptures, able to convince gainsayers, continually dropping down the heavenly dew; but not as clouds without water, without the water of true knowledge, without the water of holiness, sanctity both of heart and life, nor without the water of consolation and refreshment. The highest commendation of a minister is industry for, and usefulness to, the souls of others: clouds consume themselves by watering others. Note, 3. That although seducers are wont to make great shows and appearances of worth in themselves, yet it is a great and inexcusable sin to make show of that goodness of which we are wholly void, and to which we are also opposite; to be *wells without water*, and *clouds without rain*, big and black, accompanied with emptiness and dryness. Appearing goodness sets men at the farthest distance from real goodness; they that satisfy themselves in appearances, will never labour after holiness in reality.

18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lust of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

The next sin charged upon these seducers is pride and ostentation, they speak big, *great swelling words of vanity*; with a lofty and affected style they propounded their false doctrines to amuse the simple. It is the usual practice of seducers to speak in an high-flown strain of words, that, being not understood, they may be the more admired. Next they allure to their

party such novice Christians who had left their heathen bestiality, and made an outward profession of the Christian religion. The word rendered to *allure*, is a metaphor taken from fishers or fowlers, who produce the bait or shrape, but hide the net or snare. Seducers bait their hook with such baits as are proper to the fish they would catch, else they are no good anglers. But observe what the bait is, here before us, it is liberty, it is licentiousness, they allure through the *lust of the flesh*; no bait like this. Learn hence, That the true reason why seducers have so many followers is this, because their doctrine is libertinism, and most agreeable to the carnal lusts and corrupt affections of men. This is the true reason why Popery has had so many proselytes; *they allure through the lusts of the flesh*. Never was religion better calculated for gratifying men's beastly lusts than Popery; it indulges a liberty to all abominable lusts and unchristian practices, yet after all will blanch over wilful violations of God's laws with the favourable title of venial crimes. *Sit Anima mea cum Philosophis*; let my soul, at the great day, be rather found among the sober heathen philosophers, than among sensual and brutish Christians.

19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

Observe here, 1. How the old pretence for the most unbounded licentiousness has been liberty; *they promise them liberty*; a liberty to do any thing without fear; but this is not liberty properly, but licentiousness, which in reality is the greatest slavery. Accordingly it follows, *they themselves are the servants of corruption*; that is, such as promise you sinful liberty, are the greatest slaves to sin and corruption themselves. All sin is servitude and slavery; and, when sin and sinners flatter men with the great opinion of liberty, it makes them the most miserable vassals, and the worst of slaves; for so many lusts, so many lords, so many vices, so many tyrants, has a sinner over him; *for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage*. As when the conqueror brings the vanquished into captivity, he makes them slaves, and imposes on them vile and servile offices; in like manner, those lusts, by which sinners have been conquered and brought in bondage, they must needs be slaves unto. Is this liberty to obey every lust as a petty slave! Call you this freedom, when a

man cannot choose but sin? If to sin be the only liberty, they have no liberty in heaven; no, this is the service of corruption; a thralldom, not a freedom: *for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage*.

20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

By escaping the pollutions of the world, understand their renouncing of them in baptism; their conversion from heathenism to the profession of Christianity, by the knowledge of the gospel. Now, if afterwards they return to it again, and are entangled in their idolatry, and other gross sins, their latter end is worse than their beginning, their Christian heathenism worse than their old heathenism. Learn hence, That a person may forsake many gross and scandalous sins, and have a visible change and reformation wrought in his life; but not being a thorough and prevailing change, he is still in an unsafe state; his latter end may be worse than the beginning.

21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

As if the apostle had said, The sin and misery of these men had been far less, if they had never known the way of righteousness revealed by the gospel of Christ, than, after they have known it, to forsake the practice of holiness, which by their baptismal profession they had obliged themselves unto. Learn hence, That to sin against light and knowledge received in and by the gospel, is a very heinous aggravation of sin. The condition of persons simply ignorant, is not so bad by far as theirs who have been enlightened, and yet afterwards have apostatized. A relapse is ever more dangerous than the first sickness, more soon incurred, more hardly cured. Woe to those that relapse from God to the world, from truth to error, from grace to vice; their latter end will be worse than their beginning, if they recover not themselves again by timely repentance.

22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog

to turned to his own vomit again ; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Observe here, The odious character given of apostates ; the apostle compares them to dogs and swine, who though washed in the water of baptism externally, yet their natures were never internally renewed by the Holy Ghost, as Christ's sheep are. All the outward reformation of life which is found in unrenewed persons, is but like the washing of a swine, which you may make clean, but can never make cleanly : upon occasion it will again to the mire ; make the swine a sheep, change its nature, and it will never delight in filth more ; but, whilst it retains its filthy nature, it will delight in filthiness. Dogs that have disgorged their stomachs are dogs still ; and swine washed, are swine still. No wonder then if temptation draw them to return to their vomit and mire again. O our God ! as thou hast outwardly washed us in baptism, do thou inwardly renew us, and thoroughly sanctify us, by thy Holy Spirit ; as we are the workmanship of thine hands, make us also the sheep of thy pasture, that our love to purity may daily more and more increase ; that when apostatizing sinners return to their vomit with the dog, and to the mire with the swine, and so draw back into perdition, we may be of the number of those that persevere, to the salvation of our souls. *Amen.*

CHAP. III.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing chapter, at large described the seducers and false teachers, which in all ages trouble and perplex the church ; he comes, in this chapter, to inform us, that those men would proceed to that height of impiety, as to scoff at the principles of religion, and to deride the expectations of a future judgment, which in the close of this chapter he describes ; and exhorts Christians to the love and practice of universal holiness, as the best preparative for the day of judgment ; advising, that no profit may tempt them, no pleasure entice them, no privacy encourage them, to do that thing which they would not be found doing, if judgment should surprise them in the doing of it. Accordingly thus he writes :

THIS second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you ; in *both* which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance ; 2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour :

Observe here, 1. The design of both St. Peter's epistles was one and the same, even to put them in remembrance of, and

to call to their minds, what they had formerly heard and understood, but possibly not retained, nor duly considered. *This second epistle I write ; in both which I stir up your minds by way of remembrance.* Note, The office of ministers is to be remembrancers. *The Lord's remembrancers*, by putting him in mind of the people's wants ; their *people's remembrancers*, by putting them frequently in mind of their duty to God : There is then a constant necessity of a conscientious ministry ; none are weary of it but such as love not to be reminded of their duty by it. Nay, farther, St. Peter tells them he would stir up their *pure minds* by way of remembrance ; implying, that the memories of the best Christians stand in need of refreshing, and the affections of the holiest want a fresh exciting. The freest Christians sometimes want a spur : we are slow to learn what we should do, and more slow to do what we have learnt. Great then is the sin of those who contemn repeated truths. Cursed is that curiosity that despises a wholesome truth, because it is common. If we have such nice stomachs that will not endure to eat twice of the same dish, if wholesome ; it is just with God, that want should overtake our wantonness. Observe, 2. What it is that he would have them remember and be mindful of ; it is the word of prophecy in the Old Testament, and the doctrine of the gospel in and under the New ; *That ye be mindful of the words spoken before by the holy prophets*, namely, Enoch, and Daniel, who prophesied of the general judgment of the last day, and of the destruction of Jerusalem then at hand. Observe, 3. How St. Peter here joins the prophets and apostles together, as concurring harmoniously in their doctrine : what was foretold by the prophets was confirmed by the apostles ; hence they are said to have but one mouth, *St. Luke i.* As he spake by the mouth of all his prophets, not by the mouths ; for, though the prophets and apostles were many, yet had they all but one mouth, speaking all the same things.

3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming ? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.

Observe here, 1. The persons foretold, or what sort of men should be found in these last days ; namely, *scoffers*. These are the dregs of mankind, found in the dregs of time ; they scoff sometimes at the word of

God, sometimes at religion, and the ways of good men, sometimes at sin, and the follies of those that are bad. The scoffing spirit is a vile spirit; it is better to be a fool than a flouter; better to have a dull spirit, than a deriding spirit; to deride God and religion is the height of impiety. Such as are in the chair of the scorner are in the highest form in the devil's school. Observe, 2. What it was that these men scoffed at; namely, at the prediction of our Saviour's coming to judge the world; they say, *Where is the promise of his coming?* Because Christ did not come when some looked for him, they concluded he would not come at all, but that all things should go on in a constant course, as they had done from the beginning of the creation. Observe, 3. The character of the persons who are called scoffers; they are said to *walk after their own lusts*, men of sensual spirits and licentious lives. No wonder, that they who give themselves up to all manner of sensuality, do deny a judgment to come; for, as it is expedient for them that there should be none, so they endeavour to persuade themselves that there shall be none, and are glad to find arguments to fortify themselves in that persuasion. But surely God scorneth the scoffers; he will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their desolation cometh. Lord! what a black and horrid ingratitude is this, to scoff at the Author of our beings, and the Patron of our lives; to live in defiance of him in whom we live! Is it not time for God to come and judge the world, when men begin to doubt whether ever he made it?

5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7 But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

These scoffers had declared in the former verse, that the world was the same it was from the beginning, that nature always had and therefore ever would, keep its course. But, says the apostle here, these scoffers know better; if they be ignorant, they are willingly ignorant what a change God made in the world since the first creation of it, and that he can as easily destroy it as he did at first create it. To evidence this, the apostle shows how God by water drowned

the old world, and therefore all things had not continued as they were from the beginning of the creation, and that this present world shall, when God's time is come, be ruined by fire, as the old world was by water. The same omnipotent power of God which created the world, upholds and preserves it, and will at last destroy it, namely, at the final judgment, when all wicked persons, especially profane scoffers at, and deriders of, Christ's coming, shall be condemned, and perish. Hence learn, That those great and awful works of God, the creation, preservation, and final destruction of the world, first by water, and next by fire, none ought to be ignorant of, but all ought to meditate frequently upon, and be continually prepared for. Note, 1. That the day of judgment will be a day of perdition to ungodly men; they shall then be utterly and eternally destroyed. The wicked are called in scripture sons of perdition; they are so actively, they make it their work, to destroy others; and they are so passively, they shall be destroyed at that day, when they and their works shall be burnt up.

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, (as some men count slackness,) but his long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Our apostle here answers the cavil and objection of the fore-mentioned scoffers, namely, That if Christ intends to come to judgment, why does he so long defer his coming? To this our apostle replies, 1. By assuring them that this delay ought not to be judged according to our sense and apprehension of things, for God does not measure time as we do; but a thousand years, which seem so long to us, are but a day, yea, but a moment, to him who is eternal, and inhabiteth eternity. To the eternity of God no finite duration bears any proportion, to eternity all time is equally short; God does not measure time by our pole, nor cast up years by our arithmetic. 2. He assures them farther, that God's delay of judgment did not proceed from slackness, but from divine patience and goodness. He delays his coming on purpose to give men time to repent, and by repentance to prevent their own eternal ruin. Learn hence, 1. That God's delay of judgment is no ground for sinners to conclude

that he will not come to judgment, for our Saviour has no where fixed and determined the time of it. We can neither be sure when our Lord will come, nor certain when he will not come. Learn, 2. That the true reason why God defers judgment, is to give sinners opportunity for repentance; if this be not complied with, he reserves those who are incorrigibly bad to a more remarkable ruin, condemning them that will not be saved, but obstinately destroy themselves.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night: in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat: the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.

Our apostle having asserted, that this solemn day of judging the Jews, at the destruction of Jerusalem first, and then of all mankind at the end of the world, will certainly come; he next shows the manner how, and that although this great day of the Lord comes slowly, yet it will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night, surprising the secure and unprepared part of the world. The thief cometh without warning, and without noise, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. Rev. xvi.

15. *Behold, I come as a thief: blessed are they that watch.* Observe next, The apostle declares what a great change there will be when Christ comes to judgment, namely, a total dissolution of the whole frame of nature: *The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt, and the earth be burnt up*; that is, say some, totally consumed and utterly abolished; for when there is no more need of sun and stars, of earth and water, why should they be any more? And when the saints see God face to face, what need of the glass of the creatures to behold the face of God in? Others conceive that the heavens and the earth shall not be annihilated, but bettered and improved, their substance continued, but their qualities changed; that out of this conflagration God will bring forth a new edition of heaven and earth, and of what is contained in them, to be the everlasting monuments of his own power and goodness, and the delightful object of his saints' contemplation.

11 *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness:*

These words are St. Peter's practical

improvement of the foregoing doctrine concerning the certain, sudden, and terrible judgment of Christ to come. If the whole frame of heaven and earth shall be so wonderfully changed, and a new world made, how holy should they be, and how great a degree of purity should they labour to attain unto, who expect to live in this new world? Learn hence, That the firm belief of Christ's coming to judgment, and the dissolution of this sinful world by fire, should convince all Christians of the necessity of, and engage them in the pursuit and endeavour after, a life of universal holiness, and that with the utmost care and possible diligence: *Seeing all these things,—what manner of persons ought ye to be!* Heaven is an holy place, has holy company, holy employments, holy enjoyments; we must be qualified for it, before we can be admitted into it, and begin that life of holiness upon earth which will never end in heaven; without a present meetness for heaven we must never expect to be admitted into it, Col. i. 12.

12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

Having exhorted persons by holiness to prepare for Christ's coming to judgment in the foregoing verse, he now directs them to expect and look for it, to desire and long after it, *looking for and hasting to the coming of the day of God*, that joyful day of our perfect deliverance and salvation, when the lower heavens and earth shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat. Learn hence, That there is, or ought to be, in all believers, a vehement desire after, and a fervent longing for, the coming and appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. O Christian! long intensely for Christ's company, for know assuredly he longs for thine.

13 Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. 14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless:

Observe here, 1. What is the subject matter of the Christian's expectation: he looks for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness, that is, only righteous persons, and perfectly righteous

persons, where sin shall no more prevail. Observe, 2. What is the ground and foundation of this hope in the Christian: it is the promise of God, *We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth.* To hope for any thing that God has not promised is presumption. Hope is the expectation of some future good which God has promised, and faith believed. Observe, 3. How Christians should qualify and fit, make ready and prepare, themselves for this joyful hour, this desirable place and state: *Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.* Give all diligence that ye may be found at that day in a state of peace and reconciliation with God by justification, and without spot and blameless, without any allowed spot or blame, by pressing now after the highest measure of sanctification, that so an entrance may both joyfully and abundantly be administered to you into that kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness.

15 And account *that* the long-suffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; 16 As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things: in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

In these words St. Peter advises them to make an holy and wise construction of the forbearance of God in his delaying to come to judgment, not to think that God neglects them under sufferings, or is well pleased with the perverseness of the wicked world in sinning; but his patience and long-suffering towards them is hereby displayed, in order to the bringing of them to repentance, and by repentance to salvation. *Account that the long-suffering of God,* that is, the design of God in his long-suffering, is the sinner's *salvation.* Here note, That patience and long-suffering in God is an ability or power in him, not only to delay the execution of his wrath for a time, by a temporary suspension of it towards them that perish, and shall feel it at last; but to delay the execution of it towards others, in order to their eternal salvation, that they may never feel it. Observe next, How this apostle, to add to the strength and authority of what he had spoken concerning the certainty of Christ's coming, and their duty

to be in a ready preparation for it, doth make mention of St. Paul as bearing witness in several places of his epistles thereunto. *Even as our beloved brother Paul hath written unto you in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things.* As the prophets had all one mouth, so had the apostles also, speaking all the same thing. Observe lastly, The testimony given by St. Peter to St. Paul's epistles. He acknowledges, 1. That there were *some things in them hard to be understood.* Mark, he doth not say many things, much less that all things, in St. Paul were hard to be understood, but some things only. How vainly then doth the church of Rome produce this text, to prove the obscurity of the whole scripture! whereas the great and necessary things to our salvation are so plainly revealed in scripture, that even babes in Christ do apprehend and understand them. And though there be difficulties in other points, more remote from salvation, yet they are so for our exercise and trial, to excite our most intense study and diligence. Note farther, Who the persons are, to whom the scriptures are hard to be understood,—to the unlearned and unstable, who wrest and pervert them to their own destruction. The original word rendered to *wrest*, is a metaphor taken from torturers, who put a man upon the rack; they torment him so long, till they make him speak what he never meant to speak; so these wrest a sense out of scripture which the Holy Ghost never intended. *Scriptura obscuritas non novae Regulae necessitatem, sed Spiritus illuminantis et ministerii exponentis necessitatem ostendit.*—Bishop Davenant.

17 Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness: 18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

Our apostle concludes his epistle with an exhortation to watch against the errors and false doctrines of seducers, lest we, being led away thereby, do fall from our own steadfastness in the faith of the gospel. It ought to be our care not only to be found in the faith, but steadfast in the faith; and that we may be so, we are here directed. 1. To grow in grace, in all grace, in faith, hope, and love; for grace establishes the heart, and, accordingly, steadfastness and increase of grace are here joined together. 2. To grow in knowledge: the way to be

kept steadfast is to grow in grace: and the best way to grow in grace is to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, to know him in his person, in his offices, in his undertaking, in his doctrine, in his example; such a knowledge as this is of Jesus Christ, is fundamental to all graces. They all begin in knowledge, and are increased by knowledge. *Grow in grace, and in the*

knowledge of Jesus Christ; behold how these two keep equal pace in the soul of a Christian, namely, grace and knowledge; in what degree one increases, the other increases proportionably. To the author and finisher of which grace, to the fountain and foundation of which knowledge, be ascribed all honour and glory, both now and for evermore. *Amen.*

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF S T. J O H N.

As touching the author and penman of this Epistle, the church of God has in all ages concluded it to be St. John the apostle, the same person that wrote the Gospel, though we do not find his name prefixed to either, which is looked upon as an evidence of his great humility: he that was so high a Christ's favour as to be called, "The disciple whom Jesus loved," how little and how low was he in his own sight?

The time when he wrote this epistle is concluded to have been a little before the destruction of Jerusalem, because he speaks of the last "hour now at hand," which is generally understood to be the last times of the Jewish state; and because of the many antichrists and false prophets, which were then amongst them, such as Christ tells us, Matt. xxiv. 24. were to be the immediate forerunners of that destruction.

The occasion of writing it seems to be twofold, partly to arm the Jewish converts against those loose doctrines, that faith without works, believing without doing righteousness, was sufficient to salvation; that men might be children of the light, and yet walk in darkness; the favours of God, without obedience to his laws, or love to his children or servants; and partly to fortify them against the impious errors of the Gnostics, who sprang from Simon Magus, and pretended to extraordinary measures of knowledge and divine illumination, from whence they had their name; but notwithstanding all these glittering appearances, they allowed themselves in all manner of impious and vicious practices.

Now that St. John particularly aims at these men, is evident from the frequent and plain allusions throughout this epistle, to those names and titles which this sect assumed to themselves: thus, ch. ii. 4. "He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." This sect also pretended that, whatever they did, they could not sin. Hence is that of the apostle, ch. i. 8. "If we say that we have no sin, the truth is not in us. In a word, these men not only held it lawful to renounce Christianity, that they might avoid persecution, but also joined with the heathens in persecuting the Christians; for which reason the apostle taxes them with hatred of their brethren, and calls them murderers; therefore, to show the inconsistency of these principles and practices with Christianity, the apostle writes this excellent Epistle now before us, asserting, that nothing is more essential to a true Christian than the love and practice of universal holiness; and let men pretend to what knowledge and faith they please, wickedness is a plain mark and character of the children of the devil. This is the general scope and design of St. John's Epistle."

CHAP. I.

THAT which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life:

It is first observable, that whereas St. John began his gospel with a description of Christ's divinity, as God, he begins his epistle with a demonstration of the truth of his human nature, as man: for the certainty of which he appeals to the judgment of sense, because the senses, when rightly circumstantiated, are the proper judges of all sensible objects; accordingly St. John here, to show the certainty of Christ's in-

carnation and manifestation in the flesh, brings in three of the five senses, to wit, *hearing, seeing, feeling*, to bear witness to it, the latter still carrying a stronger testimony than the former: to see is more than to hear; to feel is more than to see: *That which we have heard, which we have seen, which we have handled*. Observe farther, That to make the testimony yet more strong, St. John adds two words more, by way of confirmation, 1. *That which we have looked upon*; now this is more than to see; to see may be but a transient, sudden act, but to *look upon* is a fixed and deliberate act, and usually a pleasing and delightful act; we looked upon him as the rarest object, as the desire and the delight of our eyes. 2. It is added, as the surest ground of certainty, that their hands had handled the Word of life; as they daily conversed with

Christ, so they handled and touched him, both before his resurrection and after it; so that from hence we may remark, that God has given us the highest and fullest assurances that can be desired, of his Son's manifestation in our flesh, and appearing in our nature; he was heard and seen, looked upon and handled by those that conversed with him, which are evident demonstrations of the truth of the human nature assumed by him. Observe farther, That our apostle takes notice of Christ's divine nature, as well as asserts the reality of his human nature: he styles him *the Word, the word of life, and the word which was from the beginning*: in the beginning when all things received their being, then the Word was, and did actually subsist, even from all eternity: Learn hence, That Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, not only antecedent to his incarnation, but even before all time, and the beginning of all things, had an actual being and subsistence. Prov. viii. 23. *I was set up from everlasting, then was I by him as one brought up with him*; thus was this Jesus, in whom we trust, both God and man, having two distinct natures in one person.

2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

As if the apostle had said, "*Christ Jesus*, that eternal life which was with the Father from eternity, as being his eternal Son, was in the fulness of time manifested in the flesh, and we his apostles saw him in his assumed human nature, and do now testify, publish, and declare him unto you; he was pleased to subject himself to the notice of our senses; and what we have heard, seen, and felt, and has been manifested unto us, that we do with all integrity declare and manifest unto others." Note here, 1. The title given to Christ, he is *life, eternal life*, he is so in himself, and he is the foundation of life to us; we now live by him a life of justification, we derive from him a life of holiness and sanctification, and we hope to live with him a life of glorification. Note, 2. This eternal life was from all eternity with the Father, and distinct from him; he was with the Father, not as an instrument but as an agent, in making of the world, Heb. i. 2, 3. and as his Father's delight, Prov. viii. 31. Note, 3. This eternal life which from the beginning was with the Father, in the fulness of time was manifested to the sons of men; manifested, not as he was to the prophets,

by faith, so they rejoiced to see him, John viii. nor in the similitude and likeness of flesh, so he sometimes manifested himself to the patriarchs, Gen. xviii. but manifested in the flesh to his apostles, who eat and drank, discoursed and conversed, with him. Note, 3. That what the apostles saw of Christ they made manifest to others; they had themselves sufficient satisfaction of the verity of Christ's human nature, and of the certainty of his doctrine, and therefore with mighty assurance they declare it unto others, and the reason of that declaration follows in the next verse.

3 That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

As if he had said, "We declare that unto you of Christ which we ourselves have seen and heard, and what we had by sight and hearing you are to receive from our testimony; and our design and end herein is sincerely this, that you may have fellowship and be of one communion with us, and not of false teachers, and by virtue of your communion with us may partake of the same faith and grace, and all spiritual benefits and privileges, which Christ has purchased for us; and you will have no cause to repent of your coming into our communion and fellowship; for verily we, and all that have sincerely embraced the doctrine of the gospel with us, have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and with each other." Learn hence, That believers have communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and one with another. *Quest.* What doth this communion include? *Ans.* 1. Real union; believers are united to God and Christ morally, conjugally, mystically. 2. Reciprocal community; a community of enjoyments, the Lord is their's, and they are his; a community of affection, there is mutual love, mutual delight, mutual desires, and mutual hatred; a community of interests, they have the same designs and ends, the same enemies and friends; a community of privileges, the Lord visits them, and they visit him; the Lord walks with them, and they with him; the Lord observes them, and they observe him; they impart the secrets of their hearts to him, and he imparts the secrets of his word and of his providence to them, Gen. xviii. 17. *Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?* *Ques.* 2. What are the benefits and advantages of this communion?

Ans. It affords the highest honour, the sweetest pleasure, and the chiefest happiness; it is heaven on this side heaven; our happiness and theirs differs only in degree, not essentially, but gradually. Blessed privilege!

4. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

Observe here, The great end for which the apostles penned and wrote the doctrine of the gospel, namely, that their joy may be full who do believe it and obey it. The joy which good men experience in the word of God is a solid joy, a substantial joy, a full joy, a lasting joy. Worldly joy is nauseating, but not satisfying; glutting, but not filling. But that joy that is found in the holy scriptures, in the word and promise of God, is better experienced than expressed. Christianity doth not extirpate our joy, but regulate and refine it; it shows us the proper object of our joy, what to rejoice in, and the manner how, that we may not sin in rejoicing.

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

That is, "This is the sum and substance of the gospel of Christ's doctrine, and our message, to teach us to know what God is, namely, light, that is, a being of infinite knowledge, wisdom, and purity; and that there is *no darkness in him*, no darkness of error, no darkness of ignorance, no darkness of falsehood, impurity, and sin, found with him, or can be pleasing to him. Note here, 1. The gospel is a message, a special and gracious message, sent by God to a lost world. The ministers of the gospel are messengers sent of God to make known this message; and if so, then they must receive their mission from God, then their message depends not upon their own but God's authority; then their people are to receive it, not as the message and word of man, but, as it is indeed, the word of God. *This is the message that we have heard, and declare unto you.* Observe, 2. The metaphor which St. John makes choice of, to set forth the nature of God by. He describes him, 1. Affirmatively, *God is Light*, his nature and attributes are (though darkly and imperfectly) resembled by it: the light, as it was the first of all creatures, shadows forth the eternity of God's being, who is the first and the last; light, of all bodies, as the most immaterial and uncompounded, denoting the spirituality and simplicity of God's nature. Is the light diffusive, and cannot but impart itself for the benefit

of others? so is God communicative of his goodness to all persons, shining upon the just and upon the unjust. But according to the apostle's intendment here, light is of a pure and undefiled nature, it is a bright and spotless splendour; though it shines upon a dunghill, it contracts no pollutions: this represents the perfect purity and unspotted holiness of God. 2. Negatively, *In him is no darkness at all*; that is, God is so pure, that not the least impurity can cleave unto him; so holy, that no sin can be found in him, and consequently, no darkness of sin or impurity can proceed from him. Learn we then, always to entertain high and holy thoughts of God, and to conceive of him as a being that hates sin, and all the works and workers of darkness, Psal. v. 4. *Thou art not a God, that hast pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee: sinners shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity.*

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another:—

Observe here, 1. What great plainness of speech St. John uses with and towards such persons as call themselves Christians, and pretend to fellowship with God, but yet hold communion with sin: he says *they lie*. O how well does fervour, vehemency, and impartiality, become the ministers of Christ in reproving sin! Health is found in those smart wounds which ministerial reproof makes. Observe, 2. St. John speaks in the first, not in the second, person plural; *if we say, not if you*; if we apostles and minister, as well as if you disciples and members of Christ, be guilty of this hypocrisy, *we lie, and do not the truth*; he does not say, and speak not the truth; but do it not: there is a two-fold lie, the lie of the lip, and the lie of the life, and the latter is the louder of the two; they lie, because they do not truth. The sum is, that a profession of piety and religion, accompanied with sin and unsuitable walking, is odious hypocrisy, abhorred by God and man. Observe, 3. The practice of the sincere and serious Christian, *he walks in the light*; that is, in the clear knowledge of the gospel, and in the exemplary and exact performance of his duty. Walking implies motion, it is a voluntary motion, an uniform and even motion, a progressive motion, a constant motion. To talk of religion is easy, but to walk wisely before God and man in the practice of our whole

duty, requires diligence and circumspection. Observe, 4. The pattern after which the Christian walks, and that is God: he walks in the light, *as he is in the light*; God is in the light, that is, all his actions are exactly pure and holy, and our walking must, for the quality of it be holy, though for equality it cannot be so holy as God is holy. Observe, 5. A double privilege secured to such as walk in communion with God: we have fellowship one with another; justification by Christ, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. Note, 1. Such as walk in the light have a certain fellowship and communion with God and Christ and the Holy Spirit, and they with him, and likewise an intimate fellowship and communion one with another. Oh! how great is our dignity! how gracious Christ's indignation! how high are we exalted! how low is he abased! The second privilege follows!

—And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Note here, 1. The pollution and uncleanness of sin implied and supposed in the word *cleansing*; sin is the great pollution and defilement of the soul, an universal pollution, an abiding pollution, a mortal pollution, and yet an insensible pollution. Note, 2. The remedy which the wisdom of God has provided against this malady, the soul's pollution by sin; and that is the blood of his Son; this cleanseth meritoriously, called therefore *the blood of God*, as being the blood of him that is truly and really God. Note, 3. The extent of the efficacy and virtue of this blood. 1. In regard of the universality of the disease, it cleanseth from all sin. 2. In regard to the permanency of the remedy, which is expressed in the present tense, it *cleanseth*: implying that this blood doth never lose its efficacy; it cleanseth still no less than it did the first moment it was shed: nay, it cleansed virtually before it was shed; all the patriarchs and prophets were justified and saved by faith in his blood, who was the lamb slain from the beginning of the world, in the decree and purpose of God. Eternal thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose blood cleanseth from the guilt and filth of all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we say; we apostles, we cannot say we are free from sin; much less can the proud Gnostics say so, who suppose and assert themselves to be in a state of perfection. And observe, he doth not say, If

we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; but that if now we say we *have* none: intimating, that Christians, as well after as before conversion, continue sinful persons; a perfect freedom from all sin being altogether unattainable in this life, not only by ordinary Christians, but by the most eminent saints. The church of Rome will have it that this is, *magis, humiliter quam veraciter dictum*, rather spoken humbly than truly; but the apostle doth not say humility is not in us; but the truth is not in us: he saith not, we extol ourselves, and there is no lowliness in us; but, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us; no truth of knowledge in our understandings, no real holiness in our hearts. Who can say, he has made his heart clean! We can neither ascribe what purity we have to ourselves, nor yet attribute perfection to our purity; and if so, how should we long for the day of redemption, when no sin shall affect us, no sorrow afflict us; when we shall be clothed with unspotted purity, perfect felicity, and that to all eternity.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Behold here, 1. A double blessing promised and insured, namely, justification and sanctification, forgiveness of sin, and cleansing from it, yea, from all iniquity; when God pardons sin, no sin is left unpardoned; the sea can as easily drown a thousand men as a single man; God's act of pardoning grace is free and full. Observe, 2. The certainty of the mercy promised, God is *faithful and just to forgive*; not merciful and gracious, though so he is in himself, but faithful with respect to his promises to us, and just with respect to the satisfaction given by Christ for us. Almighty God, in pardoning sin, performs an act of strict justice with respect to Christ, as well as an act of grace and mercy in regard of us; he is faithful and just, as well as gracious and merciful. Observe, 3. The indispensable duty required on our part, and that is confession of sin, *If we confess*. Now confession of sin is a penitent sinner's voluntary accusing himself to God, and condemning himself before God, with hatred of, shame and sorrow for, and a full resolution against, his sin, together with an earnest desire of, and some good hope in, divine mercy. Observe, 4. What relation confession stands in to remission, not as a meritorious cause: satisfaction, not confession, merits pardon; but it is an exclusive con-

dition, there is no remission without confession; God will not pardon without it: and it is an inclusive condition; God will, certainly will, forgive them that confess: there is not only a possibility or probability, but an infallible certainty, of obtaining remission upon confession.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Note here, The impiety and blasphemy of those who affirm themselves to be in a state of sinless perfection; they do not only lie themselves, but interpretatively, and as much as in them is, they make God a liar, by contradicting what he has asserted in his word, that all are sinners: so that upon the whole it appears, that to affirm we have no sin, is the highest pride, the greatest deceit, the loudest lie, the profanest blasphemy; it is to make the God of truth a liar, and to turn the truth of God into a lie, which evidences that his word is not in us.

CHAP. II.

MY little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*.

Observe here, The compellation. First, *My little children*. The apostle calls the Christians to whom he wrote, *Children, little children*; his little children. He calls them *Children*, because converted to Christianity; *little children*, because young and tender Christians, of a low stature in religion, and far short of manly perfections; and *his little children*, to denote that spiritual relation which was between him and them, and that endeared affection which he bore towards them. St. John, by a loving compellation, makes way for a faithful admonition, which follows in the next words: *These things I write, that ye sin not*. This must be understood in a qualified sense, thus: 1. *Sin not*, that is, as the wicked sin; take heed of scandalous enormities, though you cannot shake off daily infirmities. 2. *Sin not*, as in the same kind that others sin, so neither in the same manner that you yourselves before sinned; sin not with that fullness of deliberation, with that freedom of consent, sin not with that strength of resolution, with that frequency of action, with which you sinned before you were

called to Christianity. 3. *Sin not*; that is, as far as human nature will admit, abstain from all sin; let it be your care, prayer, study, endeavour, to keep yourselves from every evil thing. Thus Zachary and Elisabeth were blameless, *Luke i. 6*. that is, they lived in no sin known to the world, or known to themselves; so it is said of *Job*, ch. i. ult. *he sinned not*, that is, had no sin prevailing in him; no sin indulged by him. Observe, 3. As the cautionary direction, *sin not*; so the comfortable conclusion, *but if any man sin*, that is, through infirmity and weakness, through the policy of the tempter, or by the surprise of a temptation, *we have an advocate*, a mediator, and an intercessor in heaven, who is absolutely sinless, even *Jesus Christ the righteous*. It is a metaphor taken from courts of judicature, where are the guilty person, the accuser, the judge, and the advocate: thus here heaven is the court, man is the guilty person, Satan the accuser, God the judge, Christ the advocate. The proper office of an advocate is, not to deny the fact, or disown the guilt, but to offer something to the judge, whereby the law may be satisfied, and upon which the judge may, without any unrighteousness, discharge the accused. Observe, 4. An invaluable privilege here discovered, that Christ our advocate became a propitiation for us, and for the whole race of mankind, for all that lived before us, or shall live after us, for Jews and Gentiles: there is a virtual sufficiency in the death of Christ for all persons, and an actual efficacy as to all believers. Learn hence, That our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering death upon the cross for our redemption, did by that one oblation of himself once offered, make a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. The original word *propitiation*, signifies a propitiatory covering, an allusion to the mercy-seat that covered the ark, in which the law was. In allusion to which, Christ is here called our *propitiatory covering*, because he hides our sins, the transgressions of the law, from his Father's sight.

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

Observe here, 1. That a Christian may be assured of his salvation: to know that

we know, is to be assured that we know; not only to have the vital, but the fiducial, act of faith. Some Christians can say, "We know that we know him." Observe, 2. The nature of true Christian knowledge discovered; it is an obedient knowledge: it is not sufficient to profess that we know Christ, except we yield sincere obedience to him; for this is a certain mark and proof that we know Christ effectually, if we love him and keep his commandments. The true knowledge of God consists in keeping of the word of God, the whole word of God, and because it is his. Observe, 3. That to say we know God, when we do not keep his commandments, and to say we keep his commandments, when we do not know him, is a lie. Sad will their condition be who perish for want of the knowledge of God, but much sadder theirs who perish in the neglect or abuse of that knowledge. Observe, 4. That a conscientious care and constant endeavour to observe the word, and keep the law of God is a certain mark and evidence that he that doth it has the love of God perfected in him and towards him: *whosoever keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.*

6 He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

Observe here, 1. An high and honourable privilege supposed to be claimed, and that is union with Christ, and abiding in him: *He that saith he abideth in him.* The abiding in Christ is a great privilege, and the true and real Christian doth truly and really abide in Christ. Observe, 2. A great and important duty belonging to all those that do abide in Christ, and that is to walk as Christ walked; to set his example daily before them, and to be continually correcting and reforming of their lives by that glorious pattern. Every Christian is bound to an imitation of Christ, under penalty of forfeiting his claim to Christ; for no claim to Christ is or can be valid without a careful imitation of him. The temper of our minds and the actions of our lives, must be a lively transcript of the mind and life of the holy and innocent Jesus; we must be like him, or we can never love him, nor hope another day to live with him.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from

the beginning. 8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you; which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

Our apostle here exhorts Christians to the great duty of brotherly love, assuring them, that it was no new commandment which he enjoined them, but that which they were taught, not only in and by the Old Testament, but at the first preaching of the gospel amongst them; and in these respects the command of love might be called an *old commandment*, it being a branch of the law of nature, and a known precept of the Jewish religion; although in other respects it might be called a *new commandment*, because urged from a new motive, and enforced by a new example. Learn hence, 1. That the doctrine of Christian love is a divine commandment, that which Christians are not only allowed, but enjoined to practise; and it is called *the commandment*, in the singular number, to intimate, that in this one commandment all the rest were contained, so that in keeping this we keep all. What are all the commandments indeed, but love enlarged? And what is love, but the commandments contracted? Learn, 2. That the commandment of love is an old commandment; it is as old as Moses, yea, as old as Adam, being a part of the law of nature written in Adam's heart. The evangelical command of love was from the beginning of the law, and nothing new enjoined by Christ, which was not before by Moses. Learn, 3. That yet this command of love may, in some respect, be called a *new commandment*, not substantially, but circumstantially; not in the essence of the doctrine, but in the manner of the discovery; not in respect of the truth delivered, but in the way of delivering. *New*, not in regard of institution, but restitution, because purged from the old corrupt glosses of the Pharisees, who had limited this duty of love, and confined it to their own countrymen; whereas Christ obliges his disciples to love all mankind, even our very enemies. In a word, it may be called a *new commandment*, because it was never to wax old, but to be always fresh in the memory and practice of Christ's disciples to the end of the world. Observe next, The arguments to enforce the observation of this new commandment: 1. In those words, *which thing is true in him and in you*; that is, as there was in Christ a true and sincere love towards you, so look that there be a true and sincere love in you towards him, and one towards another. 2.

Because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth; that is, the darkness of ignorance in general, and the darkness of the Mosaic state in particular, is now past, and the true light of the gospel now clearly shineth.

9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. 10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. 11 But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

Two things are here to be considered, namely, the grace and duty proposed and enforced, and the sin or vice specified and opposed. Observe, 1. The grace proposed, or the duty recommended, namely, the love of our brother: *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him.* Where note, 1. The nature of brotherly love; it is a gracious propensity of heart, which a Christian bears, for Christ's sake, to his neighbour, whereby he wills, and, to his power, procures all good for him; or it is that brotherly affection which every true Christian chiefly bears to all his fellow-members in Christ, for grace's sake. Note, 2. The benefits attending the practice of this grace and duty: 1. His condition is happy, *he abideth in the light*; that is, he is in the state of grace. Charity is an evident demonstration of sanctity; and accordingly St. Paul, *Gal. v.* reckoning up the fruits of the Spirit, placeth love in the front of them. 2. His conversation is holy, *there is no occasion of stumbling in him*; that is, he walketh inoffensively in a state of grace, and neither stumbleth himself, neither is there occasion given by him that others should stumble, or be drawn into any sin. Observe, 2. The sin specified and the vice opposed, namely, hating of our brother: *He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness.* Where note, 1. It is not any hurting, but hating, our brother, that is forbidden; and that this hatred is not only forbidden whilst he is our friend, but when he becomes our enemy. To hate a friend is inhuman; to hate an enemy is unchristian. And farther, it must be noted, that whatever falls short of the duty of *loving*, cometh within the compass of *hating*, our brother; for every departure from love is a degree of hatred. Note, 2. The dismal character given of those persons who hate their bro-

ther; they are described by their wicked disposition: they are in *darkness*; by their vicious conversation: they *walk in darkness*; by their miserable condition: they *know not whither they go, because that darkness has blinded their eyes.* From the whole learn, That we must love all, in the various kinds and manners, in the various measures and degrees, according to which God appeareth in them. That is, we must love all men as men, above the brutes; and we must love all professed Christians, above all other men; and we must love real Christians, especially such of them as are eminent for wisdom, goodness, and usefulness, above all other Christians. The light of knowledge and the heat of love must be inseparable.

12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. 13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. 14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Observe here, 1. The care which God has taken, not only to have his word preached, but written: *I write unto you*, partly to supply his ministers' absence, that their writing might be instead of vocal instructions, partly to perpetuate truth unto posterity, and to transmit divine revelations to future ages. Observe, 2. The subject or persons whom our apostle writes to: *fathers, young men, and children*; where, in general the great wisdom of the apostle is to be observed and taken notice of, that he contents not himself with generals, but directs his discourse particularly to old and young; plainly intimating, that none are too young to receive instruction, none are old enough to reject it. And if St. John wrote to persons of all ages and conditions, then the sacred writings are to be read to, and read by, persons of every age and condition soever. And if the scriptures be perverted by some, that is not a natural effect, but only an accidental consequent, of reading the scriptures. Now, as evil must not be done that good may come of it, so good must not be left

undone though evil come of it. Observe, 3. The duty which all sorts of Christians ought to be exhorted and excited to, and that is, *love*; love to God accompanied with obedience; and love to all Christians, in obedience to the command of God. It belongs to all sorts of Christians, weak and strong; to all ages of men, young and old, children and fathers; to expel the poison of anger and hatred out of their bosoms, and mutually to embrace one another. Observe, 4. The reasons of our apostle's writing to all Christians in general, and to each age in particular. Note, 1. The reason assigned for writing to children, verse 12. *Because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake*; therefore ought you mutually to forgive, and cordially to love one another. Note, 2. The reason assigned for writing to fathers: *Because ye have known him that is from the beginning*; that is, Jesus Christ, who in respect of his divine nature had a subsistence from the beginning, that is, from all eternity. And if so, then our blessed Saviour had a being antecedent to his conception, and before he was born of the Virgin Mary; he then began to be man, but he did not then begin to be; for before Abraham was, he was; and he prays to his Father, *John xvii. 5.* to glorify him with the glory which *he had* with him before the world was. Mark, it is not said, with the glory which thou *preparedst* for me in thy decree and purpose before the world was, as the Socinians would have it, but the glory which *he had* with thee. He that gave being to all things, must have a being before all things. Note, 3. The reasons assigned for writing to young men: *Because ye are strong, and have overcome the wicked one, and the word of God abideth in you.* Here we have observable, 1. The enemy described, Satan, called the *wicked one*; not that he was so by creation, but by his apostasy and defection. Because the first in wickedness, because most industriously wicked, and because most obstinate and persevering in wickedness. 2. The conquest ingeminated: *Ye have overcome the wicked one.* Mark, he doth not say, *You have made a league with him, but overcome him*; there is no way to accommodate or compound matters with Satan, no way to deal with him, but by victory; we are said to overcome him, because we are sure to overcome him; resist him, and he will flee; and because we have overcome him in God's account; and because we have begun to overcome him. Yield to him, and you will find him an imperious tyrant; resist him and you will find him a timorous coward. 3. The combatants, *young men.* Youth is the warlike age;

young men are fit for action, old men for advice; young ones should begin the spiritual war betimes, possibly they may never live to be old; or if so, victory will be the more difficult by how much the longer it is delayed; and God may deny thee that grace which now thou deniest thyself. The proverb says, "A young saint, but an old devil;" but it is very hard for a young devil to become an old saint; whereas a young Christian soldier is more amiable in God's eye, and most terrible in the devil's. 4. The aids, helps, and assistants, by which this victory is attained, *Ye are strong*: that is, made partakers of divine strength; ye have your second in the field, the Holy Spirit; you are strong in the Lord, *and the word of God abideth in you.* By the strength of God, and the abiding of his word and grace in us, we overcome the wicked one, and prevail against him. God's word is the richest treasury to supply our wants, and the strongest armoury to oppose our enemies. *I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

15 Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Observe here, 1. That our apostle doth not as he did before, direct his advice to any one particular sort or rank of Christians in special, but unto all in general; *Love not the world, &c.* Observe, 2. That the prohibition here is not absolute, but comparatively only. It is not an *ordinata charitas*, but *inordinata cupiditas*, that is here forbidden; we may look upon the world, and desire it, delight in it, and in the enjoyment of it, provided we do not choose it for our portion, delight in it as our chief good. Observe, 3. St. John does not say, *Leave* the world, but *Love* not the world; he doth not say, *Use* not the world, but, *Love* it not; that is, seek not after the world inordinately, and delight not in it immoderately. Seek it we may, but not in an undue manner; delight in it we may, but not in an undue measure. Observe, 4. The arguments which our apostle makes use of to enforce his dehortation: The contra-

riety of the love of the world to the love of God: *If any man love the world*, (in an undue manner and measure,) *the love of the Father is not in him*: that is, the worldly lover has no interest in the Father's love; the world's darlings are none of God's friends, and the world's lover has no love of the Father in him; there is no positive love of God in him in whom there is a superlative love of the world. Lord, how desperate and dangerous a sin then is *worldly love*! If the love of the Father be not with him, the hatred of the Father is towards him, Jam. iv. 4. *Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God*! A second argument to dissuade from worldly love is contained in the 16th verse: *For all that is in the world*, that is, all that is in esteem and vogue with the men of the world, is either *the lust of the flesh*, that is, all sensual delights and enjoyments, which occasion intemperance; or *the lust of the eye*, the desire of gold, silver, stately houses, rich gardens, which tend to gratify the eye: and *the pride of life*, or the desires of honours and dignities, high titles, and places of advancement, which tend to gratify our pride, all these are *not of the Father*; that is, they are not desires excited by him, nor are they pleasing to him, but are the desires of the men of the world, and proceed from that corruption which is in them. The third argument is taken from the world itself, and its short continuance, in the 17th verse, *The world passeth away*, that is, all the things of the world, which the men of the world dote upon, and are in love with, are of a fading, transitory nature in themselves, and they pass away from their possessors and owners. *And the lusts thereof*; that is, the pleasure which they had in gratifying their lusts, passeth away, but the sting remaineth and the torment abideth. It is added, *But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*. Behold here the permanent felicity, not of the knowing, but obedient Christian. He abideth for ever, not in this, but in the other world, in a state of endless happiness. Although eternity in its most comprehensive notion be peculiar to a deity, and incommunicable to a creature, yet it is that which God has made rational creatures capable of, and as he abideth for ever, so will he grant to them that do his will to abide with him for ever also; *The world passeth away, and the lust thereof*; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists: whereby we know

that it is the last time. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Our apostle having warned them against the danger of covetousness in the foregoing verses, he cautions them against the danger of deceit in these; he tells them that this is the last time of the Jewish dispensation, and that the destruction of their city, temple, and polity, was now at hand; and as they had heard that antichrist should come, accordingly now there were many antichrists come; that is, opposers of Christ, and deniers of him to be the Christ; and by the swarming of these seducers and false teachers now, according to our Saviour's prediction, *Matt. xxiv.* they might well conclude it was the last time. Observe next, These antichrists are described by the communion which they once were of, to wit, the Christian communion: *They went out from us*, from us apostles, and from us Christians, being false brethren, and unsound Christians; for if they had been of us, as members of the same body, and had joined with us apostles, in planting and propagating the same Christian faith, *they would no doubt have continued with us*, professing the same faith and preaching the same doctrine, which we do; but they left us, that it might be made manifest that they were not all of us. Here note, That these antichristian impostors had been in the bosom of the church, and made a profession of the Christian faith; so did the false apostles, the judaizing teachers, mentioned *Acts xv.* So did *Simon Magus, Nicolas, and Cerinthus*. The church's seeming members prove her worst friends; the foxes within do more mischief than the wild boar without. *Quest.* But is it not then lawful to depart from the communion of a church whereof we have been formerly members? *Ans.* Yes, if she departs from herself; and if she degenerates and grows so corrupt a body, and be so far infected, that we cannot communicate with her without sin, which was the case between us and the church of Rome: her doctrines were erroneous, her worship idolatrous; we went out from them, because they went out from the ancient apostolical church. *Non fugimus: sed fugamur*: Not we, but they made the separation, and consequently the schism lies at their door.

20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

As if our apostle had said, "Although there are many antichrists and seducers abroad in the world, yet the most holy God hath anointed you with his Holy Spirit, which will preserve you from pernicious error, and lead you into all necessary truth, if you obey and follow him." Observe here, 1. A privilege enjoyed, *Ye have an unction from the Holy One*. By which understand the Holy Spirit in his sanctifying gifts and graces, which consecrate believers as kings and priests unto God. Observe, 2. The advantage of that privilege declared, *Ye know all things*; not absolutely, but with restriction and limitation: *all things*; that is, all divine things, all divine things revealed, and all things revealed that are necessary to salvation: *all things* needful to be known, and as far as needful for you to know: all things relating to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, ourselves, sin, Satan, the law, the gospel, grace, and glory; ye know all these things by virtue of your unction.

21 I have not written unto you because you know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. 23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also.

Observe here, 1. The character given of the gospel; it is *the truth*, the word of truth, the way of truth, confirmed by real miracles. It is divine truth, universal truth, effectual truth, and no lie; for Almighty God would never have set the seal of his omnipotency to a lie, and have confirmed it by signs and wonders, miracles and gifts, of the Holy Ghost, had it been false. Observe, 2. The character given of the heretics in St. John's days, and in our days also; they denied that Jesus is the Christ, and therein deny the Father and the Son: *For whosoever denieth the Son the same hath not the Father*; that is, he denieth the Father as well as the Son; for not having the Father, and denying the Father, is the same thing, verse 22. *He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son*. This is a text in which every Socinian may see himself an Atheist: he that denies the divinity of the Son, denies the deity of the Father; for such is the nature of the godhead, that one of these cannot be alone; the Father is not without the Son, nor can be; nor can the Son be without the Father; this coherence is inseparable and inviolable; he that de-

nies the eternal Son, denies the eternal Father; and if it be Atheism to deny the divinity of the Father, it is no less to deny the deity of the Son; for he that denieth the Son, denieth the Father also. There is such a connexion between these two, the Father and the Son, they being co-essential, and co-eternal, that if you deny the divinity of the one, you deny that of the other; therefore they are Atheists that deny the divinity of Christ, as well as they that deny the being of God: *For he that denieth the Son denieth the Father also*.

24 Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

These words are an exhortation to hold fast, and not to forsake, the doctrine of Christianity, which from the beginning they had received, and not to turn to novelties. *Let that abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning*; that is, from the first preaching of the gospel. Note here, What is truth and true doctrine, namely, that which was delivered from the beginning. Truth is error's elder, though error is not much truth's younger. Note, 2. By what means they received the evangelical doctrine, namely, by *hearing*; let that which you have heard abide in you. No sense more needful than that of hearing, for the benefit and advantage of man; both as he is by nature a reasonable creature, by converse a sociable creature, and may be by grace a new creature: faith cometh by hearing. Note, 3. The duty required with reference to what they had heard: *Let that which ye have heard abide in you*, namely, by a careful remembrance of it, and by resolute adherence to it. The sum of this exhortation is, that we retain and maintain the ancient catholic and apostolic faith; and verily when we consider how tenacious heretics are of their novel errors, it may bring a blush into our faces to consider how ready we are to be withdrawn from primitive truths. Observe next, The motive with which our apostle doth enforce and back his exhortation—*If that which ye have heard remain in you, you shall continue in the Son, and in the Father*; that is, in the love and favour of the Son, and of the Father, and in communion with both. *Quest.* But why is the Son put before the Father here? Partly to insinuate, that the Son is no less in essence and dignity than the Father, but equal in both: accordingly the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the

apostolical benediction, is mentioned before the love of God the Father; and partly because no man cometh to or continueth in the Father, but by the Son: *He is the way, the truth, and the life*. The doctrine of the gospel comes from Christ; it leads to Christ, and by him unto the Father. See John xiv. 23. *If a man keep my word, we will make our abode with him.*

25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even* eternal life.

Observe here, 1. How gracious Almighty God is to enforce his commands with promises of reward; he required of us adherence to the truth, and perseverance in it, in the former verse; here he promises eternal life by way of encouragement in this verse. Observe, 2. The benefit promised, *Life, eternal life*: the greatness of this life is immeasurable, the worth of this life is inestimable, the joys of this life innumerable, the duration of it interminable. Observe, 3. The certainty of the conveyance; this is the *promise promised*. Mark, He doth not say *purposed*. A purpose is a secret and a hidden intention of the mind; but a promise is a revelation of that intention; yea, it is more than a declaration. A promise makes sure, as well as makes manifest; especially God's promise, which has his oath for the confirmation of it, *Heb. vi. 17*. Observe, 4. The peculiarity of the persons to whom the promise is made, he hath promised *us*: not to us as apostles only, but to us as Christians; all that are born of God are begotten to a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; again, he has promised *us*, not promised *all*, eternal life, but us, who are thus and thus qualified, who keep his commandments, and walk as he walked. Observe, 5. The eminency of the author by whom this promise is made, in the relative *he*: *This is the promise which he hath promised*. Here note, That eternal life was promised by God to good men under the Old Testament: *Heb. xi. 16*. tells us, that the Old Testament saints desired a better country, to wit, an heavenly; now how could they have desired it, if they had not known it? and how could they have known it, if God had not revealed it? And Christ bade the Jews search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; intimating, that in the writings of Moses, eternal life was made known typically and darkly; not so clearly and fully as by the gospel, 2 *Tim. i. 10*. He is holy, and cannot lie; righteous, and cannot deceive; immutable, and cannot repent.

26 *These things* have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 27 But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

Observe here, The pious care which St. John expresses for their preservation from heretics and seducers: *These things have I written to you concerning them that seduce you*. That is, To arm them against the seducers then amongst them; intimating that men are naturally prone to error, yea, to fundamental errors. 2. That to be seduced by, and led into, such errors, is dangerous and destructive. 3. That it is the special duty, and ought to be the singular care, of the ministers of Christ, to warn their people of, and arm them against, errors, and erroneous persons, against seducers and seduction: *These things I write concerning them that seduce you*; that is, those who endeavour to seduce you. Observe next, The encouragement which St. John gives them against these seducers, and their seduction: the anointing which ye have received from Christ, that is, from the special illumination of his Spirit, this *abideth* in you, *teaching you all things* necessary for you to know, so that you need not any man to teach you: that is, any new doctrine, any new fundamental principles of faith. Note here, That Christians savingly enlightened by the Spirit of God need no new gospel or doctrine to be instructed in; but they need farther teaching still, in order to their better improvement in what they know: vain therefore are the quakers' and other sectaries' arguments drawn from hence, against all ministerial teaching; because the Spirit teaches, man must not teach: whereas the Spirit teaches mediately by man, and not immediately by itself. When these seducers can show that they have such an immediate and extraordinary *affluence* of the Holy Spirit, as was vouchsafed to the primitive Christians, then let them cry down the necessity of ministerial teaching, not before.

28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

Still our apostle re-enforces his foregoing exhortation to abide fixedly in Christ,

that is, in the doctrine of Christ, in true Christianity: *And now, little children, abide in him*; and the argument which he makes use of, is very forcible and cogent, namely, *That when Christ shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.* Note here, 1. Something supposed, namely, the coming and appearance of Christ; he shall appear. 2. Something implied, namely, our appearance before Christ in the day of his appearance. 3. Something expressed, namely, the confident appearing before Christ of all those who abide in him: *That we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.* Whence learn, that the persevering Christian shall have confidence before Christ at his coming; shall lift up his head without shame or blushing, from the testimony which conscience bears of his sincerity, and from the interest he has in the Judge; but on the other hand, they that do not persevere and abide in Christ shall be ashamed before him at his coming; ashamed of their gross hypocrisy, of their vile unfaithfulness, of their manifest folly.

29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

Our apostle concludes the chapter with an exhortation to holiness and righteousness, assuring them, that if they be sensible (as they must necessarily be) that God is righteous, essentially and infinitely holy and righteous; they may and ought to know also that whosoever is born of him, and doth receive a new nature from him, doth certainly endeavour to live unto him, and to walk before him as his child in a way of obedience, and to expect favour and protection from him as from a father. Learn hence, That all that sincerely live a righteous life towards God and man, are certainly born of God; and such as are born of God do certainly live that righteous life: then, and only then, may we know that we are indeed God's children, when the image of our heavenly Father is instamped upon us, and the disposition of his children wrought in us; when there is a happy conformity in our natures to the holiness of God's nature, and in our lives to the righteousness of his law; when he beholds his own face in the glass of our souls, and loves us for his own image instampt and imprest upon us.

CHAP. III.

BEHOLD, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,

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that we should be called the sons of God!

Our apostle begins this chapter with wonder and admiration at the astonishing goodness and condescension of Almighty God towards believers, in taking them into his family, and adopting them into the number of his children; that strangers and enemies should be dignified with the honourable and amiable title of sons; it is the same relation that Christ has, *I ascend to your Father, and my Father*; there is indeed a diversity in the foundation of it; Christ is a son by nature, we by favour; he by generation, we by adoption; however, not only crowns and sceptres are beneath this dignity, but the honour of our innocent state was not equal with it; well might the apostle then break out with an heavenly astonishment, and say, *Behold, what manner of love is this, that we should be called, accounted and acknowledged for the children of God!* Here note, 1. That it is the high and honourable privilege of all true believers, that they are now the sons of God. They are so, 1. By regeneration: they are made partakers of the divine nature: not in the essence of it, but in the gracious qualities of it, which enables them in some measure to resemble God the Father: they receive a principle of spiritual life from God, which enables them to live unto God; and this principle received in regeneration is an inward principle, an universal principle, a God-exalting principle and an abiding principle. 2. They are children by adoption also; adoption is the acceptance of a stranger into the relation and privileges of a son; it was a rare condescension in Pharaoh's daughter to rescue Moses, an innocent and forsaken stranger, from perishing by the waves, and adopt him for her son; but O! how much greater kindness was it for Almighty God to save guilty and wretched man from eternal flames, and to take a rebel into his family! This privilege of being the sons of God by regeneration and adoption, is a choice and gracious privilege, an high and honourable privilege, a free and undeserved privilege, a lasting and abiding privilege. Observe, 2. As the privilege itself, so the fountal cause of it, the fountain from whence it doth proceed and flow, namely, from the gratuitous love and free favour of God; what manner of love has the Father bestowed upon us! He cannot say what, nor how great, it was; he admires it, but cannot declare it: yet though adoption was the effect of God's free love, it was the fruit of Christ's rich purchase: he of a Son became a servant, that we of slaves might become sons. Observe,

3. In the word, *Behold!* a note of attention and of admiration both: God expects, the gospel requires, and the privileges of adoption deserves, that it be beheld with love and wonder, taken notice of with joy and thankfulness, and improved for growth in grace, and advancement in holiness: *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!*

—Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Note here, 1. That the believer's dignity, though real and great, is altogether unknown to the unbelieving world: they are so far from acknowledging them to be God's children, that they mock and scoff, jeer and deride them, for pretending so to be; and as they little know them, so do they less affect and love them, but hate and persecute them: *The world knoweth us not.* Note, 2. The reason assigned why the world knows not the children of God, *Because it knew him not*; God once made himself manifest to the world in and by his Son; Christ, in whom dwelt the fulness of the godhead, came and dwelt among us: but the world *knew him not*, received him not: and if they saw no beauty in him, who had strength of grace, and no corruption in him, is it any wonder that they see no excellency in them in whom is much weakness of grace, and too great strength of corruption? *Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

As if the Apostle had said, "Although the world knows us not, affects us not, esteems us not, because of the weakness of our grace, and the strength of our corruptions, yet notwithstanding both these, we are now the sons of God; this is the happiness of our present condition, we are as children in their minority; we are not grown up for the inheritance, but we are growing; we are not what we would be, we are not what we should be, we are not what we shall be, but, blessed be God, we are what we are: now are we the sons of God." Observe, 2. As the honour and the dignity of the Christian's privilege in this life asserted, *we are now the sons of God*, so their happiness and glory in the next life described: *It doth not yet appear what they shall be*: the glory which God has prepared for all his adopted children and people, is an hidden glory, a glory that doth not yet

appear: what the saints shall be in their perfect state of glory, doth not yet appear to them in this their imperfect state of grace. 2. By way of positive assertion, *But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* Here note, 1. The certainty of Christ's appearance declared, *He shall appear.* 2. A double benefit which believers may expect at his appearing. 1. *They shall be like him*, as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality; like him in a perfect freedom from sin, like him in the ardour and intense fervency of their love; like him in the perfection of grace, and the unspotted purity of his holy nature. 2. *They shall see him*: that is, his glory, with a clear and immediate sight, with a full and comprehensive sight, with an assimilating and transforming sight, with an appropriating and possessive sight, with a satisfying and everlasting sight.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Every one that hath this hope, that is, the hope of seeing and enjoying Christ in glory, he now endeavours to purify himself according to the pattern and copy which Christ hath set before him, labouring to imitate it, though he cannot reach it. Observe here, 1. The character of a Christian by this hope, *Every man that hath this hope in him.* Learn, That a Christian is a person of high hopes, and raised expectations, as to future blessedness: the author of this hope is God; the object of this hope is some future good promised and expected; the grounds of this hope are the promise and oath of God, the purchase and undertaking of Christ, and the sanctifying work of the Spirit, in and upon his soul. Observe, 2. A description of this hope by its inseparable effects, it *purifies the Christian*; he that has this hope *purifies himself*. Where it is implied, 1. That sin is a pollution which we must be purified from. 2. That the holiest of saints here on earth are not perfectly purified from this pollution, but are daily endeavouring to purify themselves more and more. Observe, 3. The pattern after which the sincere Christian doth conform in this work of purification, and that is Christ; he purifies himself, even as he is pure: intimating, that the Lord Jesus Christ was a perfect pattern of purity; and that it is the Christian's duty to eye this pattern, and to endeavour to conform himself thereunto, by purifying himself, even as Christ is pure.

4 Whosoever committeth sin, trans-

gresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law. 5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

Whoever committeth sin, that is, whosoever lives in the allowed commission of it, lives in rebellion against, and in a flat opposition to the law of God, sin being a transgression of God's laws; and such a person as thus commits sin, not only violates the law of God, but also frustrates the death of Christ; for Christ in whom there was no sin, was manifested in the flesh to take away sin, the guilt of it, by his blood, the power of it by his Spirit, and consequently we must purify ourselves from it, if we hope to see him as he is. Learn hence, That nothing can be more unreasonable and absurd, than to expect salvation with God in heaven by a sinless Saviour, if we allow ourselves in a course of sin; nothing being more contrary than this to the design of Christ's death, which was not only to deliver us from the danger, but from the dominion, of our sins; not only to expiate our sins, but to make us sinless like himself.

6 *Whoever abideth in him sinneth not: whoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him.*

That is, "Whoever lives in sin, and goes on in a course and trade of sinning, is the servant and slave of sin; and although his reason condemns him, his conscience boggles at it, and his will is something averse to it, yet if he yields his members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, he is the servant of sin, and whatever his pretence may be, he has no right knowledge of Christ, nor any true faith in him; for whoever abideth in him *thus*, sinneth not." Learn hence, That the sincere Christian, so far as he is in Christ, and by faith united to him, and is taught and ruled by him, sinneth not; that is, he makes it his constant care and continual endeavour to shun and avoid all sin. 2. That such persons as go on in a course of sin, let their pretences to Christianity be what they will, they never had any experimental knowledge of Christ, no fellowship or communion with him; nor can ever hope to be happy in the fruition and enjoyment of him: *Whoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*

7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous.

As if the apostle had said, "Let no man

deceive you by making you believe that a right faith may consist with an unrighteous life, for only *he that doeth righteousness is righteous.*" Note here, 1. That there is a twofold doing righteousness. 1. In a legal sense, which stands in an exact obeying and fulfilling of the law; and thus there is none righteous, no, not one. 2. In an evangelical sense, a walking uprightly, according to the rule of the gospel, conscientiously avoiding all known sin, and performing every commanded duty: it is not a single action, but a constant course of holy actions, that denominates a person holy; a righteous man makes righteousness the business of his life; his daily care is how to please God in all he does. Note, 2. That it is the duty of every Christian, that would not be deceived as to his spiritual state and condition, to try himself by this infallible mark and rule of trial: *He that doeth righteousness is righteous; he that doeth not righteousness is not of God.* Christian, enquire not so much what thy affections are, what thy desires are, what thy joys and comforts are, as what thy actions are; not what thy peace is, but what thy paths are; for God doth not measure men's sincerity by the tide of their affections, but by the constant bent of their resolutions, and the general course and tenor of their conversations. *He that doeth righteousness is righteous, and only he.*

8 *He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.—*

That is, "So far as a man sinneth, so far he is of the devil, and like unto him, in whom sin is predominant: he having been an old sinner, soon after the beginning of the creation, and a bold tempter to sin all his days." Learn, 1. That Satan has kept in a constant and continued course of sinning against God from the beginning of his apostasy, and first moment of his revolt from God: *The devil sinneth from the beginning.* Learn, 2. That such as make sin their work, do make themselves the devil's children; they are his children by imitation: St. John viii. 44. *Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do.*

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

As if he had said, "The Son of God came purposely into the world to destroy sin, the work of the devil, in all that he will save." Note, 1. The odious character wherewith sin is branded, it is *the work*

of the devil, that work which he is always doing himself, and which he is continually tempting and soliciting others to do, that they may be as miserable as himself. Note, 2. Our Saviour's manifestation in the flesh asserted: the Son of God was manifested, namely, to the world, and in the world; he appeared in our nature, and was seen in our flesh; it was a real exhibition, and not an imaginary manifestation of him. Note, 3. The great end of this gracious manifestation of the Son of God in our nature, it was to destroy the works of the devil, to loose and dissolve; so the original: this supposes mankind to have been in bonds and fetters; we were in durance and captivity, shut and locked up in the prison-house; we were under the dominion of sin, and power of Satan, but the Son of God came to rescue us, to knock off our fetters, and to set us at liberty: by the works of the devil understand all sin in general. 2. Those sins in particular, which have most of the devil's image upon them, and render persons most like unto him; such are malice and envy, rejoicing at the calamities and delighting in the evils that befall others, rage and passion, bitter strife and contention, schism and faction, lying and falsehood, craft and treachery, but especially pride and haughtiness, which was the sin that turned Satan out of heaven, and made him a devil in hell. 3. By the works of the devil, here, are meant in particular, idolatry, and all idolatrous worship, even to the worshipping of the devil himself; this, and all other kinds of idolatry, had strongly prevailed and over-run the world before the coming of Christ, who came on purpose to deliver mankind from this slavery, and to put down the kingdom of Satan, and beat him out of those strong holds which he thought had been impregnable: *The Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Observe here, 1. The character of a true Christian, *he is born of God*; he has in the work of regeneration passed under a blessed change by the operation of the Holy Spirit, renewing his nature, and reforming his life; yet this denotes not a single transient act of regeneration, but rather a continued course, and permanent state; one that is born of God is the same with him that leads a pious and godly life, and continues so to do. Observe, 2. What is here asserted concerning him that is born of God, namely, that he doth not commit sin;

and that he cannot sin. 1. *He doth not commit sin*, he is no evil-doer, no worker of iniquity, no habitual or customary sinner; he goes not on in any way or course of sin, as the wicked do, who make a trade of it; yea, he doth not tolerate or allow himself in any single act of sin: not that he is absolutely free from all sin. 2. It is said he cannot sin. But how? and why? How can he not sin? has he not a natural power to sin? has he not corruptions within, and temptations without, inclining and disposing him to sin, as well as other men? and has he not opportunity to sin, the same expectations of advantages by sin with other men? Yes, no doubt; but he has not a will bent for sin, or a heart and mind set upon sin, as the wicked have; nay, he has a heart and will opposite to sin, and set against all sin. A gracious person, then, though he has not a natural impossibility, yet he has a moral impossibility, to sin. He that is born of God hath a power to do that evil which he hath not a will to do; he hath always a natural power, and sometimes a civil power, as being in authority; but his blood and pedigree are so high, being born of God, that he disdains to meddle with, or to trade in, so base a thing as sin. Note, That a child of God has a blessed impotency in the unregenerate part, that he cannot sin strongly, though as yet he has not that ability in the regenerate part as not to sin at all. Observe, 3. The reason assigned why a regenerate person cannot sin as the wicked sin: because *his seed remaineth in him, and because he is born of God*; that is, he has an inward principle inclining and disposing him to hate and oppose all sin, to wit, the sanctifying grace of God; and he has that mortifying spirit, which causes him daily more and more to die unto sin, and enables him to mortify the deeds of the body. Learn hence, That although sin remaineth in him that is born of God, yet he that is born of God doth not remain in sin, either as to a sinful state, or a sinful conversation; God's word and Spirit, by which he was regenerated, still remain in him; and so far as he is under the ruling power and governing influences of them, he cannot sin, much less live in wilful sin.

10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

Our apostle in these words gives us the distinguishing character of a good and bad man; those who in their dispositions and

actions, in the temper of their minds, and in the actions of their lives, do imitate God, are his children; and those who addict themselves to sin and impiety are of another race and descent, they are the children of the devil; they resemble him and belong unto him. By doing righteousness, is meant the practice of universal goodness, and a thorough conformity to the law of God, in opposition to sin, which is the transgression of the law. Learn hence, 1. That every man may come to the certain knowledge of his own condition, whether he be a good or bad man. *By this the children of God are manifested*; that is, hereby good and bad men are really distinguished; the scripture has laid down real marks of difference between them. Learn, 2. That the love and practice of universal righteousness, and nothing short of it, will denominate a person a child of God, and evidence to his own conscience that he is brought into a state of grace and favour with him: *In this the children of God are manifest: whosoever doeth righteousness is of God.*

—Neither he that loveth not his brother.

This discovers a farther difference between the children of God and the children of Satan, namely, *brotherly love*; he doth not say, he that *hateth* his brother is a child of the devil, but *he that loveth not his brother*; intimating, that not only hatred and malice against, but want of brotherly love towards each other, is the mark and sign not of a child of God, but of the devil. He that doth not unfeignedly love men as men, and all Christians as Christians, is no child of God, no lover of God; for he that loveth not God's image, loveth not God himself.

11 For this is the message that we heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. 13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

Our apostle comes now to enforce his exhortation unto brotherly love, by many weighty arguments: 1. He assures them, that his precept concerning brotherly love was given them by Christ and his apostles, from the beginning of the preaching of the gospel: *This is the message ye heard from the beginning.* Note here, 1. That the word of God is a message sent from God unto us, a message for our information and instruc-

tion, a message for our guide and direction. 2. That the duty of brotherly love is an ancient message that God has sent, and has continued to send us, *from the beginning*; God help us to learn this lesson, so anciently taught us, and so long pressed upon us by God himself! *This is the message which ye heard from the beginning.* A second argument to excite brotherly love is drawn from the evil of hating our brother, which appears in the person and practice of Cain, whom our apostle describes, 1. By his pedigree, *He was of that wicked one*, that is, the devil; of his diabolical disposition, of his envious and malicious inclination, and, as such, was not so much Adam's son as the devil's son. 2. By his practice, he slew his brother; he first hated him, and then slew him. His hatred was canseless and unjust, implacable and deadly, and ended in his brother's death and his own destruction. 3. The reason is assigned why he slew him, *Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous*; not for any harm he had done, or for any evil he had deserved, but because Cain was bad himself, and his works bad: to hate godliness, and to persecute the godly, is the very nature and disposition of a wicked man. Observe lastly, the inference drawn by the apostle from this example of Cain's hating his holy and innocent brother: *Marvel not, my brethren, says he, if the world hate you*; intimating that the world always did, and ever will, hate God's children; and that the children of God are not to marvel or wonder at it, but to prepare for it; it is no new thing, but what has been from the beginning: though Cain be dead, the spirit of Cain is alive; the persecutor goes about with Cain's club in his hand, reddened with blood; *marvel not then if the world hate you.*

14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle's description of a carnal, unregenerate state; it is a state of spiritual death. 2. Of a Christian's renewed state by the Spirit of Christ, it is a state of spiritual life: *we are passed from death to life.* 3. Here is the mark and token by which this translation from death to life may be known, namely, by *love*; for love being the great work of God's renewing Spirit on the soul, it is by the production of that we come to the knowledge that we are changed from a Cainish corrupt state of death, unto a state of holy life: whatever grace men pretend unto, if they want this grace of love, they are yet dead.

in sin. Observe, 4. The characteristic note of that love which will be an indubitable evidence of this our translation from death to life: it must be a love of the brethren; that is, of all Christians, as such; particularly it must be an extensive and universal love, that reacheth all the children of God, all good men, of what judgment and opinion soever, otherwise it is the love of a party only, and a love for opinion's sake, not for grace's sake, *Colos. i. 4.* *We give thanks since we heard of your love to all the saints;* that is, to all of what nation and kingdom soever, of what estate and condition soever, of what judgment and opinion soever, though differing from you in some lesser things. It must also be an holy love that will evidence our Christianity; though all men must be loved as men, yet the brethren must be loved for the likeness of God in them; we must love God's holiness in holy persons; it is one thing to love the brethren, and another to love them as brethren, and because they are brethren; a gracious person may be loved only for carnal respects, and sinister ends: again, it must be active and operative, a costly and expensive love; that cheap love of some men, which will wish a poor Christian well, but will be at no pains, no cost, or expense, to help and succour him, because they love their money better than they do their brother, is the hypocrite's love, not the saints'; see *James ii. 15.* *If a brother or sister be naked, and we say unto him, Be thou clothed, &c.* this a cold sort of love, which will profit neither our brother nor ourselves. From the whole learn, That the love of grace in another, is a good evidence of the life of grace in ourselves; unfeigned love to the children of God as such, is an undoubted evidence of our regeneration and adoption: *We know that we are passed from, &c.*

15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

¹ Observe here, 1. The nature of the sin condemned, it is a secret sin of the heart, not an open sin of the life; he that *hateth his brother*, that is, in his heart, is a murderer, though he doth not smite him either with his tongue or with his hand. Learn hence, The sins of the heart are damning, as well as sins of the life; a man may be an adulterer in the sight of God, and yet never touch a woman, *Matt. v. 28.* an idolater, and yet never bow his knee to an image, *Eph. v. 5.* a murderer, and yet never hurt his brother; if he hates him in his heart, it is recorded

murder in God's account. What need have we to put up David's prayer, *Psal. xix.* *Cleanse thou me from my secret sins?* Observe, 2. The sad and deplorable condition of such as are guilty of this sin, namely, of murdering their brother by hatred in their hearts: *He that hateth his brother abideth in death, ver. 14. and hath not eternal life abiding in him, ver. 15.* that is, he hath no spiritual life, nothing of the life of grace abiding in him, which is the seed and principle, the original and beginning, of eternal life. Note thence, That the life of grace in the heart of a regenerate person is the beginning and first principle of a life of glory, whereof they cannot but be destitute who hate their brother in their hearts. So much hatred in a man, so much death; and so much want of love, so much want of life.

16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Here our apostle presses brotherly love from another argument, namely, from the example of Jesus Christ, who being God as well as man, laid down his life, as man, for us. Where note, That the intimate union betwixt the divine and human nature in Christ, gives ground for the calling of Christ's life, as man, the life of God; as his blood is said, *Acts xx. 28.* to be God's own blood: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, that is, of Jesus Christ the Redeemer, in that he laid down his life for us.* Thence learn, That the death of Christ for us is a special manifestation of his singular love unto us. Observe farther, The inference which our apostle draws from Christ's love in laying down his life for us, namely, that we therefore ought to lay down our lives for the brethren; that is, in a time of persecution, when the glory of God, the edification of the church, and the eternal salvation of our brethren, do require it, and stand in need of it: we must never stick at laying down our lives when God calls us to it, as needful for better ends than our lives. It is not needful that we live, but needful and necessary that we glorify God both in life and death.

17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

Our apostle here draws an argument

from the greater to the less, after this manner. "If," says he, "we ought to be ready in some cases to part with our lives for the brethren, surely we much more ought to impart and communicate our worldly goods to them in the time of their necessity; and he that refuses so to do, can never think there is any thing of that love in him, which God requires of him towards his children." Learn hence, That there certainly dwells no love of God in that man's heart, who having this world's goods, stretcheth not out his hands to help the necessities of his brother. Here note,

1. The fountain from which all charitable distributions are to proceed and flow, namely, from the compassion of the heart.

2. That the compassion of the heart must draw forth the help of the hand; he that is a Christian indeed will open both heart and hand to the distressed, and they shall partake of his purse as well as of his pity.

3. It is not said, He that has abundance of this world's goods, let him of his great superfluity give; but he that *hath this world's goods*, that is, in any measure, yea, though he has no more than he works for, yet he is required, *Eph. iv. 28.* that worketh with his hands, to give to him that needeth. The world is greatly deceived who think charity and alms-giving a duty that only concerns the rich; indeed it concerns them eminently, but not exclusively. And O! the dreadful account that some rich men have to give, who expend more upon a lust in one day, than they give to the poor in a whole year. But yet after all, every one that hath this world's goods, though he has but what he labours and sweats for, yet must he, in proportion to what he has, give to him that needeth.

Note, 4. The object of this our compassion and charity; a brother, a brother in need, and every brother in need; not only such as are cast down, but such as are falling, are the proper objects of our pity and help. Note, 4. The circumstance of time when we must give, namely, when we see our brother in need. What a vanity it is to leave our alms till after our death, to be beholden to the justice of others for their distribution! Let us see our charity bestowed with our own eyes, and given out with our own hands, when the loins of the poor will bless us; but their prayers will do us no good when we are dead. *Whoso seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* From the whole learn, That when we are in a capacity, and enjoy an opportunity of expressing our charitable benevolence towards our poor and indigent brethren, the omission

of it is a certain evidence that there is nothing of the love of God residing in us.

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. 19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

Having laid down several motives to brotherly love before, by way of excitation, as an help to their affections, he comes now to propound some directions to them as an help to their endeavours. And the first is this, to take special care that their love be sincere, and not hypocritical. *Let us not love in word*, that is, in word only, but *in deed and in truth*. As if he had said, "Let our deeds speak the truth of our love; sincere love is fruitful: true affection will put forth itself into action; it doth not rest at the tongue's end, but will be seen at the fingers' end, rendering us laborious in works and offices of friendship; as faith, so love, without works, is dead; and as faith is justified by works, so is our love also." Observe next, The encouragement which our apostle gives to the exercise of this true love: *hereby we shall know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him*; that is, "by such efficacy and real fruits of our love we shall know that we are true Christians, who live by and walk according to the rule of the gospel, which is emphatically styled *the truth*, and shall have the assured testimony of our consciences that we are sincere in the sight of God." Learn hence, 1. That the love of Christians one to another, ought not to be verbal, or in word only, but in deed, and in truth. 2. That the sincerity of our love to our brethren is the security of our consciences and estates before God. A Christian may be assured of his good estate, and may build his assurance upon the sincerity of his love to God and Christians.

20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God:

By heart, here, is undoubtedly meant *conscience*; and it is as much as if the apostle had said, "If our consciences tell us that our love is barren and fruitless, and so condemn us for hypocrisy, God is greater than our consciences, both in holiness to condemn, and in knowledge to perceive, the evil of them, for he knoweth all things, whereas if we have the witness of our consciences touching the sincerity of our

love by the fruits of it; if, after a most strict examination of our consciences, and an exact comparing of our lives and actions with the law of God, we are not condemned of insincerity in our obedience to God, and love to our neighbour; then have we an humble confidence with God in all our addresses to him." Learn hence, 1. That the consciences of men have a self-condemning and self-absolving power. 2. That the consciences of men are much better known to God, than they either are or can be known unto themselves. 3. That if our hearts or consciences do condemn us, it is an evidence of greater condemnation from the heart-searching God. 4. That if our consciences do absolve us, it is an argument of our acceptance with God, and a ground of confidence in all our addresses to him. 5. That according to the verdict or testimony of men's consciences, rightly informed, and truly testifying, God will either acquit or absolve them at the great day.

22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Observe here, 1. An extraordinary favour and privilege insured, *Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him*; that is, whatsoever we ask according to his will, we are sure to receive, either in kind or in equivalency. It shall either be given in mercy, or denied in love; for verily God is as kind in denying some of our requests, as in answering others; we often cry for that which it would be cruelly for God to give: we know not what is best to beg, but an infinitely wise God knoweth what is fittest to give. *Dat pro jucundis aptissima.* Observe, 2. The qualification of the persons to whom this precious privilege does belong: *They keep God's commandments*, and do the things that please him. According to our hearing God's commandments, so he hears and answers our prayers; with what measure we mete to God, God will measure to us again. If God's command be trod under our feet, no wonder that all our prayers fall to the ground. God hears not us, if we hear not him. *If we keep his commandments, whatever we ask we receive of him.*

23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Observe here, 1. What is the sum of the Christian's duty, *faith and love*, to believe on the name of Jesus Christ; that is, to

rely upon him as our redeemer, our teacher, our king, our intercessor, and to obey his great command of loving one another with a pure heart fervently. Observe, 2. What a mighty encouragement it is to faith, that believing on Christ is constituted a duty by a plain gospel precept: *This is his commandment*, for this command cuts off that vain pretence and plea of presumption. What! such a vile wretch as thou presume to believe on Christ, says Satan. Yes, says the Christian, here is a command to me so to do, yea, a command from the highest sovereignty, the contempt whereof I must answer at my utmost peril. Observe, 3. How the command of faith and the command of love are linked and knit together, as if the weight of our salvation hung equally and alike upon both; as without faith it is impossible to please God, so without love it is impossible to please him also. Will no duty profit without faith! in like manner can we neither profit ourselves nor others without love: as whatever is not of faith is sin, so whatever duty we perform towards our brother, if we do it not out of love, we miss our reward. 1 Cor. xiii. 3. *If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, I am nothing.* Lord! can we ever think this command of love small and inconsiderable, when thou hast joined the love of thine image with faith in thy dear Son! *This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, and love one another.*

24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

Observe here, 1. The benefit of obedience to God's commands: God dwelleth in us, and we in him. God's dwelling in us implies, 1. Right and property; what a man dwells in is his own. 2. Command and authority; the master and owner is the commander and disposer of the house. It also, 3. Implies residence and continuance, settlement and fixedness of abode; there a man dwells where he constantly resides, and our dwelling in God imports, 1. Reconciliation with God. Can two dwell together except they be agreed? 2. Affiance and trust in him. 3. An upholding constant communion with him; it is one thing to run to God for refuge in a storm, and another thing to make him our dwelling-place at all times, and in all conditions: he that keepeth God's commandments thus dwelleth in God, and God in him. It follows, *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given*

us. Learn hence, That the Spirit of God, bestowed upon us in his sanctifying gifts and saving graces, is an evident sign of God's dwelling in us, and we in him.

CHAP. IV.

BELOVED, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Our apostle having in the last verse of the foregoing chapter mentioned the abiding of the spirit of God in the souls of believers, lest the Christians to whom he wrote should be deceived by such as might pretend to be acted by the Spirit, when indeed they were not; he comes in this chapter to caution and counsel all Christians to take heed of being seduced by such as should pretend to be inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, saying, *Believe not every spirit*; that is, every teacher who pretends to be inspired, and every doctrine that lays claim to the authority of divine revelation: *But try the spirits*: that is, examine their doctrines by the rule of the word of God, and try from whom they come, whether from the Spirit of God, or Satan: for many false prophets, or impostors and deceivers, are gone abroad in the world. Learn hence, 1. That men from the beginning of Christianity have, and still do, falsely pretend to divine inspiration. 2. That Christians ought not to believe every one that thus pretends to be divinely inspired; for every one that has but enough of confidence, and little enough of conscience, may pretend to come from God. Learn, 3. That neither are we to reject all that pretend to come from God; for when the apostle bids us not to believe every spirit, he supposes that we are to believe some; and when he bids us try the spirits whether they be of God, he supposes some to be of God, and that such as are so, ought to be believed by us. Learn, 4. That there is some way to discern mere pretenders to inspiration from those who are truly and divinely inspired; it were in vain to make the trial, if there were no way to discern the truth. Learn, 5. That it is the duty of all Christians to examine the doctrines propounded to them by the word of God; they having a judgment of discretion, though not a judgment of decision; a power to judge for themselves, not to impose upon others: nor does this allowed liberty of every one judging for himself take away the necessity and use of our spiritual guides and teachers, or exempt us from a due submission and obedience

thereunto, but in concurrence with them, we are to try the spirits, whether they be of God.

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: 3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already it is in the world.

In these words our apostle lays down a plain mark and rule of trial, how they might know a teacher that was acted and inspired by the Spirit of God, from one that was not; such a one as durst truly and openly in the face of danger own and profess, teach and preach, Jesus Christ in his person, nature, and offices, as the incarnate Word, or Son of God, sent from heaven, ascribing virtue and efficacy to the sacrifice of his death, and attributing to him alone the whole glory of a perfect Saviour; this doctrine is of the Spirit, and this spirit is of God. But such teachers as will not hazard themselves, but for fear of sufferings and persecution, will deny either the Godhead or manhood of Christ, and disown either his incarnation, death, or resurrection: such teachers and such doctrines are not of God, but are the very spirit of antichrist, which, says he, you have been foretold should come, and is now already in the world. Learn hence, That such a teacher as disowns either of the natures of Christ, or denies any of the offices of Christ; that either denies the divinity of his person, or the meritoriousness of his satisfaction, is not of God, he is antichrist, against Christ, and shall find Christ against him in the day that he appears before him.

4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Observe here, 1. A character and description given of these Christians to whom our apostle writes. He tells them they were of a nobler descent, of a more excellent pedigree, and higher offspring, than their false teachers; *Ye are of God*, regenerated by the Spirit of God, quickened by his renovation, led by his manuduction, acted by his influences, animated by his assistances: *Little children ye are of God*. Observe, 2. What is affirmed of these Christians, *Ye have overcome them*; that is,

ye have resisted their temptations, withstood their seductions, and all their arts and endeavours to mislead you, when others have been perverted by them. Learn hence, That by steadfastness in the doctrine of Christ, Christians do overcome impostors and seducers, when unstable souls are overcome by them. Observe, 2. The reason assigned why, and the means declared by which, they overcome, namely, *because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*; that is, Christ, who by his Spirit and doctrine dwells in you, is greater and more powerfully efficacious than the spirit of error, which influences these vile impostors and seducers that are abroad in the world.

5 They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. 6 We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

Here we have, 1. The character given of these seducers and false teachers, *They are of the world*; that is, men of worldly minds and interests. *They speak of the world*; that is, they preach a doctrine suitable to the lusts and inclinations of worldly men, who greedily hear them, and easily believe them: ordinarily, our words are such as we are; for they who are of the world must needs speak of the world, for they have nothing else to speak of. The covetous man speaks covetously, and the proud man proudly. Observe, 2. The character which the apostle gives of himself and his fellow-apostles, *We are of God*; that is, taught and instructed by God. We have our mission and our message from God, and he has given us his attestation, by opening the ears and hearts of those that attend upon our ministry, to receive and embrace our doctrine; but such as are not taught of God, reject both it and us. Observe, 3. The inference and conclusion which our apostle draws from hence, namely, that by the doctrine and writings of the apostles and evangelists, the truth or falsehood of doctrines may and must be judged: for, says he, *Hereby we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error: he that knoweth God heareth us: he that is not of God heareth not us*.

7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love.

Our apostle here resumes his exhortation to brotherly love, and urges and re-enforces it with fresh arguments. 1. He assures us, that *love is of God*: that it is the fruit of his good spirit in us; common love is his common gift, and holy love is his special grace: *Love is of God*. 2. It is an evidence that we have a right knowledge of God, both of his nature and will, and that we understand both what he is, and what he requires: he that has not the grace of love in his heart, has not the right knowledge of God in his head, whatever he may think of himself, or pretend to others. 3. The apostle assures us, That love is not only commanded, but exemplified by God himself: *God is love*. He had said before, *Love is of God*, as a quality: here he says, *God is love*: not as a mere quality, but his essence. *God is love*; 1. Essentially; love in the creature is an accidental quality, in God an essential property. 2. *God is love*, casually, the efficient cause of whatever is loving or lovely in us; all our love to him, and one another, is but a reflection of his love to us. 3. *God is love*, objectively; he is, or ought to be, the supreme object of our love: and we must love him above all, or he accounts we love him not at all. *God is love*, declaratively; all his works, as well as his word, are a declaration of his love to us, and ought to engage us to steadfastness in our love to him. *Let us, therefore*, says the beloved disciple, *love one another, for love is of God, and God is love*.

9 In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

Observe, 1. That God doth not only bestow love upon his people, but it is his good pleasure to manifest that love. *Quest.* Wherein has God manifested his love towards us? *Ans.* 1. In our creation, making us out of nothing in such a wonderful manner; our bodies curiously wrought as with a needle, our souls beautified with understanding, will, and judgment. 2. In our apostasy, and degeneration; when no eye pitied us, and when we had no hearts to pity ourselves, then were his bowels of love and compassion yearning towards us; then he said unto us, *live*, when he might have said, *die, and be damned*. 3. In our redemption, recovery, and restitution, in sending his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Observe, 2. A threefold evidence of God's love to mankind in the work of redemption, that great and glorious work. 1. It was a wonderful

instance of the love of God, that He should be pleased to take our case into consideration, and to concern himself for our happiness; as nothing is more obliging to human nature than love, so no love obliges more than that which is exercised with great condescension after a provocation; such was God's love to offending man. 2. That he should design so great a benefit to us, as is here expressed, even life: *That we might live through him.* 3. That God was pleased to use such a mean for the obtaining and procuring of this benefit for us: He sent his own Son into the world, that we might live through him. Where note, 1. The person sent, his own Son, his only-begotten Son. 2. The persons sent to, the men of the world, who were spiritually dead, and judicially dead. 3. The manner of his being sent, voluntarily and freely, not constrained by necessity, not prevailed upon by importunity, not obliged by benefit or kindness from us; but out of his mere pity and goodness towards us, he sent him into a wicked world, and into an ungrateful world, that we might live through him. From the whole learn, that God's bestowing a Son upon a lost world, was a manifest evidence of his great and wonderful love unto them: *In this was manifest the love of God towards us, &c.*

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

Herein is love; that is, the clearest, the fullest, the highest, expression of free and undeserved love that ever the world was acquainted with. Observe, That the wisdom and power of God did not act to the utmost of their efficacy in the work of creation; he could have framed a more glorious world, had it pleased him; but the love of God in our redemption by Christ could not be expressed, or set forth, in a higher degree: when Almighty God would give the most excellent testimony of his favour to mankind, he gave them his eternal Son, the Son of his love; and verily the giving of heaven itself, with all its joys and glory, is not so full and perfect a demonstration of the love of God, as the giving of his Son to die for us: *Herein is love.* Observe next, The priority of God's love to mankind: he loved us, not we him; he loved us antecedently to our loving him, and he loved us that we might love him, when there was nothing in us either to deserve or to engage his love. Observe lastly, The great intent and gracious design of God in sending his Son;

namely, *To be a propitiation for our sins:* that is, to die as a sacrifice for our sins, and thereby alone divine displeasure. *Herein is love;* that is, the triumph, the riches, and glory, of divine love, that God gave Christ to die for us. "But is there love in nothing else but this?" Yes, sure, to have a being among rational creatures, therein is love; to have our life carried so many years in the hand of Providence, like a burning taper, in the midst of winds and storms, and not blown out, that is love; to have food and raiment convenient for us, relations and friends to comfort us, in all these is love, great love; but comparatively none at all to the love expressed in giving Christ to die for us: herein was love, the flower of love.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. 13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

Observe, 1. The genuine inference which our apostle draws from the doctrine laid down concerning the greatness of God's love to us; namely, "that seeing God so loved us, we should love one another, and be like him according to our measure, and in our degree." Observe next, The apostle's argument to provoke us hereunto; he tells us, That God himself is to be loved by us for his astonishing love unto us: but as God is not to be seen in his essence, but in man his image, so must we love God in man, his creature, made after his own image in likeness; and if we love the holy image of God in each other, it is an evidence that God dwelleth in us, and we in him; namely, by the inhabitation of his Holy Spirit, which being a spirit of love in us, draws forth our love towards himself, and one towards another. And further he assures us, that this will be a sign that *love is perfect in us;* namely, that this grace is in its vigour and perfection, in our souls, sincere and entire, having all its essential parts, though it be not absolutely perfect in all degrees. Note, That perfection here is not opposed to imperfection, but to insincerity. Our love is then said to be perfected, when it is considerably heightened and improved. Blessed be God! the hour is coming when this, and all other graces, shall be perfected, when this spark of love shall be blown up into a seraphic

same. Observe lastly, The rule which our apostle lays down, whereby we may know assuredly, that God dwelleth in us, and we in him; namely, *If he hath given us his Spirit*, which is a spirit of holy love. Learn thence, That the Holy Spirit, (not in its extraordinary gifts, which are long since ceased, but) in its sanctifying operations, and gracious fruits, (of which sincere love is the first and chief,) is an undoubted evidence of God's dwelling in us by a special inhabitation, and of our dwelling in him; that is, resting in his love and favour, and under his protection and care: *Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit*; namely, as a spirit of holy and universal love.

¶ 14 And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. 15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. 16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

As if the apostle had said, "Though no man hath seen God at any time, yet we apostles who preach the doctrine of faith unto you, and press the duty of love upon you, have seen with our bodily eyes the Lord Jesus Christ, and do testify, that God the Father glorified his love, by sending his Son to be the Saviour of a perishing world; not of Jews only, but of the Gentiles also. And we further declare, That whosoever believing this our testimony shall confess with his mouth, and believe in his heart, that this Jesus whom we preach is the Son of God, and shall evidence of the truth of his faith by the sincerity of his love, and other good fruits, it is certain that God dwelleth in him by his spirit, and he dwelleth in God by repeated acts of love. And, finally, we apostles well knowing, and firmly believing the love, the wonderful great love, which God hath manifested towards us, in and through his Son Jesus Christ, we again affirm and conclude that God is love. Love originally, the fountain from whence all love flows. Love effectually, the producing cause of all love in the hearts of his people. Love subjectively, a God full of love and mercy, of goodness and pity towards his creatures. Love objectively; he is deservedly the first and chief object of our love, as he is the first and chief

good. Love declaratively, both his word and works declare the purposes of his love unto us, and give demonstrations of innumerable instances of his beneficence towards us. But especially God is love essentially. Love in us is an adventitious and accidental quality; in God it is an essential property, it is his very essence and nature, inseparable from his being; he can as soon cease to be as cease to love. And as God is love, so we again affirm, that he that dwelleth in love, that is, he who has love, as the prevailing habit in his heart, and as the governing principle of his life, dwelleth by communion in God, as the eye dwells in the light, and as one friend by love dwells in another; and God, by his spirit of love, dwelleth in him."

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth, is not made perfect in love.

Still our apostle proceeds by way of argument to enforce upon us the obligation of our duty to love one another; he assures us here, that if our love be made perfect, that is, heightened and improved by an exact correspondence with the divine pattern and precept; if we love one another in obedience to God's command, and in conformity to Christ's example; it will give us boldness in the day of judgment, and we may think and speak of, we may expect and look for, the approach of that day without fear and consternation of mind. The reason is added, because *as Christ was, so are we in the world*; that is, as he was full of holiness and purity, of love and charity, so have we endeavoured to be in imitation of his example, according to our measure in some proportion and degree. Learn hence, 1. That such as are sincerely gracious, and do excel in the grace of love, are in the world in some sort as Christ was in the world; such as walk in love, walk as Christ walked. Learn, 2. That such as are in the world, as Christ was in the world, shall have boldness when Christ comes to judgment, and need not fear the condemnation of that dreadful day: *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment*. The reason of this freedom from the fear of wrath is added, verse 18. *There is no fear in love*: that is, no slavish or distrustful fear, whereby we question the favour of God; but only a filial and reverential fear, whereby we

stand in awe of offending him as a father: *But perfect love casteth out fear*; that is, either the actings of our perfect love to God, or the apprehensions of God's perfect love towards us, do cast out all that fear which has torment in it. Yet note, That although perfect love cast out tormenting fear, it calls in obeying fear, *Ecc. xii. 13. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man*; an awful fear of God is all duty, and every grace. Note also, The true reason of our disquieting and tormenting fear, is the imperfection and weakness of our love; fear may stand with faith and love, but not with perfect faith, nor perfect love: *He that feareth is not made perfect in love*, and because he is not made perfect in love, therefore he feareth. Blessed be God, as there will be no torment, so no fear, in heaven; that is, no tormenting fear: yet there is a fear of reverence, which will undoubtedly remain with glorified saints in heaven; they shall have an everlasting awe of the majesty and holiness of God eternally fixed upon their hearts and spirits, even in the kingdom of glory in heaven, as well as in the kingdom of grace here on earth; the saints *serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*. Lord, hasten the perfecting of thy grace in us, particularly the perfection of our love, that perfect love may cast out tormenting fear, and cherish such a reverential fear, as will both prepare us for heaven, and accompany us in heaven to all eternity.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

There is a double reading of these words, according to the original. 1. They may be read, let us love him, because he first loved us, by way of motive; denoting that believers have great reason to love God with their choicest and highest affections, for as much as he has loved them, and first loved them. 2. They are here read by way of casuality, we do love him, because he first loved us; intimating, that God's love to us is the root and spring of our love to him, and to one another; all our love to saints is the effect of his preventing love to us, and but a reflection of those beams of love which God has first cast upon us: if God's love to us has been a mere dependant consequence of our love to him, how uncertain should we be of its continuance! But his love to us was the antecedent cause of our love to him; we therefore love him, because he first loved us.

20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he

that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

Our apostle in these words prevents an objection. Some might be ready to say, "Who is it that doth not love God? Is there any that live who doth not love him?" The apostle replies, That whosoever says he loves God, and yet hateth his brother, is plainly a liar; for it is impossible truly to love God, and not to do what God commands; and if we do not exercise love to our brethren, whom we daily see and converse with, how can it be imagined that we love God whom we never saw? Learn hence, First, That as God is infinitely above us, so he needeth not our love; but it is wonderful condescension in God to give us leave to love him, and to suffer himself to be embraced by those arms which have embraced sin and lust before him. Learn, 2. That though God needs not us, or our love, yet we need him, and stand in need of one another, and for that reason must and ought to love each other. Learn, 3. That if we love not God's visible image, it is certain we never loved the invisible God: if when we have our Christian brethren in our daily view, and the objects of our senses are their miseries and wants, and yet we shut up the bowels of compassion from them, can we, or dare we, pretend at the same time to love God whom we have not seen, and who is only present to our minds by raised expectations; as the sight of our brother is a strong inducement to love him, so the not loving him at sight is a strong argument that we love not God himself: *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen.*

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

This commandment; this great and chief commandment above the rest, this summary and comprehensive commandment including all the rest, namely, to love God above all, for his own sake, and to love our brother as ourselves for God's sake; this command, so full of wisdom, so agreeable to right reason, and so much our duty and interest to comply with, have we received from God; and it is most certain that we love him not, if we keep it not. *This commandment have we from God, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.* Learn thence, 1. That the great God, by his gracious command, requires that we love him, and place the supremacy of our love upon him. 2. That as God requires us to

love him above ourselves, so does he oblige us, by virtue of his command, to love our brother as ourselves; as sincerely, though not so intensely, as ourselves. Learn, 3. That the same commandment that requires us to love God, requires love to our brethren also; God interprets the neglect of our duty to our brother as a neglect of our obligation to himself.

CHAP. V.

Our apostle in this chapter prosecutes the design of the whole epistle, which is to excite and inflame in Christians the love of God and their brethren, two comprehensive duties, and our principal perfections in heaven and earth; these he recommends by the most affectionate and obliging persuasives, namely, the superlative love of God to us, and our communion with the saints both in nature and grace, and accordingly thus he writes:

WHOSOEVER believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.

Observe here, 1. The grand proposition laid down as the object of our faith, namely, that *Jesus is the Christ*; that is, that Jesus of Nazareth, who was born with and lived amongst the Jews, was the Saviour of the world, the person whom Moses and the prophets foretold to be the Messiah. Observe, 2. The duty required of us, namely, to believe that Jesus is the Christ; that is, not historically only to assent that Jesus is the predicted and promised Messiah, but to express the truth of that faith in a suitable conversation. Observe, 3. How evidential such a faith is of our regeneration; whosoever thus believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; faith in Christ Jesus, as the great king, priest, and prophet of his church, accompanied with an holy life, is a sure mark and undoubted evidence of our new birth. *Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* Observe, 4. The affection which every person that is born of God bears unto God: *He loveth him that begat*; that is the ingratiating and endearing quality; it is this that commends both our persons and performances to God's acceptance: the service of love is therefore most acceptable, because most honourable to God, and most durable and lasting from us; the obedience of love will be lasting. Observe, 5. What is the genuine effect and natural product of this love to God, namely, a sincere affection to all the children of God; *Whosoever loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him*; every Christian that sincerely loves God, certainly loves the

image of God in his saints and children, he that loves the father for his own sake, cannot but love the child for the father's sake, if like him; and the more like him, the more he loves him: *He that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

Observe here, That the sincerity of our love to the children of God, is best discovered by our love to God, and obedience to his commands. *Quest. 1.* What kind of love is required towards the children of God? *Ans.* A love of esteem, a love of desire, a love of delight, and a love of service and beneficence? *Quest. 2.* What kind of obedience towards God is that which springs from love? *Ans.* It is uniform and universal; love regardeth the whole law in all its injunctions and prohibitions, and studieth to please the lawgiver; it is pleasant and delightful, not a melancholy task, but a pleasing exercise; it is accurate and exact, it produces a severe circumspection over our ways, that nothing be done or allowed by us that is displeasing to the divine eye; and it is constant and persevering; that motion which is caused by outward poises will cease when the weights are down, but that which proceeds from an inward principle, or life, is continual; and such a principle is the love of God planted in the Christian's breast; *By this then may we know that we love the children of God, if we love God, and keep his commandments.*

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.

Our apostle in these words gives a threefold description of a sincere Christian. He describes him, 1. By his inward affection to God and Christ, and that is love; this is shed abroad in his heart. 2. By the action which flows from this affection, namely, obedience to God in keeping his commandments. 3. By the disposition and inclination from which that obedience doth proceed and flow, namely, a delight and cheerfulness in the doing of our duty. *His commandments are not grievous*; that is, they have nothing in them heavy or burdensome, but every thing that may render them at once both our duty and delight. Learn hence, 1. That obedience is the most natural and necessary product of love; where love is the governing principle, it rules all the inclinations of the heart, and actions of the life. Learn, 2. That love

makes our obedience to God cheerful and constant, delightful and lasting. Love is seated in the will, and that obedience which proceeds from it is out of choice, and purely voluntary. No commandment is grievous that is performed from love, and it makes obedience also constant. That which is forced from impressions of fear is unsteadfast, but that which flows from delight is lasting. Learn hence, That the service of Christ is a very gracious, a most desirable and delightful, service; not to sinners, whose minds the god of this world has blinded, whose consciences are cauterized, who have not only grieved but quenched the holy Spirit of God. But, 1. It is not grievous in itself. 2. Nor is it grievous to a regenerate person; a sound eye never complains of light, but a sore eye is uneasy under it. The commands of Christ cannot be grievous, because they exact things of us which are agreeable to our reason, suitable to our natures, consonant to our rational desires. We cannot give an instance of any one of the commands of Christ which is in itself grievous; that command of his, to do to others as we would have others do by us, is a dictate of nature as well as of the law of Christ.

4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Two things are here observable, namely, a proposition, and the explication of that proposition. Observe, 1. The proposition, *Whoever is born of God overcometh the world*. Every regenerate Christian is a victorious Christian, he is a conqueror, yea, the greatest of conquerors, he conquers the whole world. Observe, 2. The exposition of this proposition: *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*. It is a spiritual conquest, and spiritually obtained, even by faith. Note here, 1. That the world is the Christian's grand enemy. A conquest supposes a combat, and a combat supposes an enemy. 2. That every regenerate Christian is a victorious conqueror over this enemy. The Christian is a soldier as soon as he is a believer, and he is a conqueror as soon as he is a soldier. *This is the victory*, he hath his enemy under his feet, even whilst he is in the fight. Note, 3. That the special weapon by which the Christian conquers the world, and his spiritual enemies, is his faith. Many warriors have done great things in conquering kingdoms, but this is a greater conquest than all theirs; their

conquest was but poor and partial, only of some small parts of earth, but the Christian's conquest is universal; those conquerors, whilst they prevailed abroad, were slaves at home; whilst they were lords of nations, they were vassals to their own lusts: but these conquerors, which the text speaks of, begin their victories at home, and enlarge their triumphs over all enemies abroad: *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*.

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? 6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.—

Our apostle having spoken of the usefulness of faith in the former verse, that it *overcometh the world*, next discovers the object of this faith, which is this proposition, that *Jesus is the Son of God*. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* That faith which overcomes the world, is faith in the divinity and sonship of Jesus Christ. We overcome the world by believing in him that overcame it, even Jesus Christ, who hath purchased, promised, and prepared, a better world, than what we do see, or can see, with our bodily eyes, and has made us heirs of eternal glory. Observe next, The argument by which the apostle proves that Jesus is the Son of God, the true Messiah and the Saviour of mankind, namely, because he *came by water and blood*; that is, say some, by the testimony given him when he was in the water at his baptism, both by John the Baptist, and the voice from heaven; he came by his Spirit say others, *as by water*, to sanctify those that believe in him, and by his blood to make a full atonement for them; an admirable symbol of both which, was the flowing of water and blood both out of Christ's side, when he hung upon the cross. It is a sweet meditation that Christ comes by water as well as blood, by way of sanctification as well as by way of justification; his death not only discharges from guilt, but cleanses also from pollution and filth. Blessed be God, there is a fountain opened in the side of our Saviour for sin and for uncleanness, to wash in, and to be purged from. Sanctification is as great, and in some respects a greater privilege, than justification; for justification frees us only from misery and punishment, but sanctification frees us from sin, which is worse than punishment. Again, real perfections are above relative

perfections; now justification by Christ's blood is only a relative perfection, it makes us stand in a new relation to the law, by which before we stood guilty and condemned; but sanctification by the Spirit of Christ, signified here, and set forth elsewhere frequently, by water, is a real moral perfection, it changes the heart and nature, and makes us like unto God, yea, like unto him in his highest perfection, which is that of holiness. Come then, O blessed Redeemer, by water and blood into our souls, with thy renewing grace and sanctifying Spirit, to purge our consciences from dead works, and to deliver us not only from the danger, but from the dominion of our sins!

—And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

Some by the Spirit's bearing witness, understand the testimony which the Holy Spirit gave to Christ here upon earth, as touching the truth of his doctrine, the reality of his miracles, and the certainty of his mission; others understand by it the Spirit's testimony in the holy scriptures, and in the consciences of believers, that Jesus Christ is a divine person, and came by water and blood, both to save us at once from the wrath of God, and the rage of our lusts. Learn hence, That the Holy Spirit of God speaking in the scripture, and breathing in the consciences of believers, bears witness to their souls, that Jesus Christ came to save them by the water of sanctification, as well as with and by the blood of redemption; and that the Spirit thus witnessing is a spirit of truth.

7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word; and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

That is, "There are three in heaven which do bear record to this truth here upon earth, namely, that *Jesus is the Christ*: that is to say, the three Persons in the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: the Father bore witness both at Christ's baptism and transfiguration also, when with an audible voice he declared, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*: the Word bore record of himself, affirming frequently, plainly, and directly, that he was the Son of God, and making it manifest by his doctrine and miracles that he came from the Father: the Spirit bore witness to this, partly by descending on Christ at his baptism in the shape of a dove, and partly by descending on his apostles at the feast of Pentecost in the

figure of fiery tongues, *Act ii*." Learn hence, 1. That it was no easy matter to believe the truth of our Saviour's mission and miracles, and that Jesus Christ was the essential and natural Son of God. Though by the mouth of two or three witnesses every truth is established, yet in this and the next verse we have no less than six witnesses produced to prove our Jesus to be the Son of God, three heavenly and three earthly witnesses.—It is added, *these three are one*; one in testimony, say the adversaries of the Trinity, but one in essence: one in both, say we; as one in testimony, so one in essence. But suppose we should grant that the oneness spoken of in the text is to be expounded of consent in testimony, agreement and will, principally, yet will it prove the godhead of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost; for in three agents, where there is the same will, there is the same nature: with men, it is the same specific nature; but with God, because there is but one only God, therefore it must be the same numerical nature. Learn, 2. That there are three Persons, yet but one God, that do bear witness to the divinity of Christ, and of the plenteous redemption wrought by him.

8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

As if the apostle had said, "As there are three in heaven who have given us their testimony to the divinity of Christ and his doctrine here on earth, so there are three witnesses here below, testifying the same thing; namely, the Spirit, in the preaching of the gospel, and in the souls of believers; the water, or sacrament of baptism, wherein we are baptized in the name of the Son as well as of the Father; and the blood, that is, the death of Christ, and the sufferings of those who have sealed this truth with their blood: all these do give testimony on earth to Christ's divinity from heaven." Note here, That though much of these two verses be left out in many ancient copies of the Bible, as the learned Dr. Hammond takes notice, yet in copies more ancient they are found; and we have more reason to believe that the Arians left them out, than that the orthodox put them in, other texts that assert the truth being so abused. It has been the common course of heretics to disown the authority of such texts as do gall and pinch them. Note farther, That the doctrine of the blessed Trinity stands built upon Holy scripture, as a firm basis and impregnable rock, and the doctrine of the Anti-Trinitarians falls to the ground

like Dagon before the ark. Lord, let our understandings evermore stoop and yield to this divine revelation, though it contain such a doctrine as doth exceed the comprehension of human reason.

9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son. 10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

Our apostle's argument in these words is taken from the less to the greater, thus: "If, says he, for the believing of any thing, it be ordinarily thought sufficient to have the testimony of two or three credible men, then surely the testimony of the faithful and infallible God, given from heaven, is much more worthy of belief; but the testimony given concerning Christ, that he is verily the Son of God, is evidently the testimony of the faithful God that cannot lie; therefore he that, after all the assurance which God has given of his Son's being a true and real Saviour, shall yet reject and disown him as such, does in effect accuse God of falsehood, and make him a liar, because he believes not the record which God has given of his Son; whereas the person that believes on Christ as the Son of God, and the true Messiah, is safe, having the testimony of God the Father without him, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit within him, as the spirit of holiness, wisdom, and power: *He that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not the Son, hath made him a liar.*" Learn hence, 1. That every testimony which God gives us is infallibly true. 2. That the testimony which God has given us concerning his Son Jesus Christ being the true and promised Messiah, has had its confirmation abundantly above and beyond other testimonies. 3. Therefore such as do not believe on our Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world, they disbelieve the most undoubted and infallible testimony of God, and in his account make him a liar. Lord, what a bold, presumptuous, and daring sin, is unbelief! It gives God the lie, and makes the God of truth a liar.

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. 12 He that hath the Son, hath life: *and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.*

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As if our apostle had said, "The sum of God's testimony recorded in the gospel is this, concerning his Son Jesus Christ, namely that God for his sake has made a free deed of gift of pardon and salvation to the world, assuring them of grace here, and eternal life hereafter, upon condition of their believing acceptance, that is, of faith and obedience; and, accordingly, he that thus has Christ, he that accepts the merit of his blood, and submits to the authority of his law, *hath eternal life*, that is, he has an undoubted right unto it, and assurance of it, yea, he has it already initially, and in the first fruits; but he that either by unbelief or disobedience refuses Christ, *shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.* Learn hence, 1. That eternal life is the gift of God. 2. That this gift of eternal life is laid up for us in his Son. 3. That upon our having or not having union with and interest in the Son, depends our having or not having eternal life. *He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son, &c.*

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

Our apostle entering now upon the conclusion of his excellent epistle, acquaints them with his design and end in the writing of it, namely, 1. That they might know they had eternal life, that is, both a right and title to eternal life, and might also attain to the knowledge and assurance of it. Learn thence, That believers may in this life, without the help of extraordinary revelation, attain to a knowledge and well-grounded assurance of life eternal. *These things have I written unto you that believe, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.* There is a threefold knowledge; *Notional*, which is barely the work of the understanding; *Experimental*, which is seated in the heart, and visible in the life; *Fiducial*, when a person is ascertained and assured of what he knows: thus here *these things I write*, that ye may know that ye know; that is, be assured that ye know: a Christian may believe, and yet not be assured that he does believe; many have a vital act, who have not a fiducial act of faith; many have a faith of adherence, that want a faith of evidence: faith and assurance in a saint differ as much as reason and learning in a man; every man has reason, but every man that has reason has not learning, which is the improvement of reason; thus every good man has faith, but every one that has faith

has not assurance, which is the special fruit of faith. This therefore was the first design and end of St. John's writing, that they might know they did believe; the second follows, that those *that did believe, might believe on the name of the Son of God*: the meaning is, that they might more firmly believe, be more rooted, grounded, settled, and confirmed, in the faith, so as to remain unshaken by all the storms of persecution that might fall upon them; this seems to be the sense of the apostle when he exhorts *believers to believe*. *These things I write unto you that believe, that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God*. The strongest believers may be exhorted to strengthen their faith, and to persevere in the faith, which they are strengthened and established in.

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

To enforce the foregoing exhortation to believers, namely, to be confirmed and constant in the faith, he shows them here what a special advantage believers have above other persons, namely, confidence in all their approaches to God; and a full assurance, 1. In general, that whatever they ask in faith, according to his will they shall obtain; 2. In particular, that our several petitions which we present unto God shall, in his own time, in his own way, and after his own manner, be granted by him, provided our persons and our prayers be qualified according to the gospel for the receiving of his promise. Hence learn, That through our interest in Christ, and for the sake of his meritorious satisfaction and prevailing intercession, our prayers are certainly heard by God, and we shall assuredly have what God has promised to give, and we are fit to receive. God indeed does not always, nay, not often, come with an answer of prayer at our time, but he never stays a moment beyond his own time. Learn, 2. That in all the prayers we present and put up to God, a special eye and regard must be had to the will of God, if we expect to be heard and answered. *If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us*. The will of God is the rule not only of things to be done by us, but also of those things which we crave of God to do for us. The will of God under a threefold revelation is the rule and matter of prayer. 1. The will of God in his commands; whatever God hath re-

quired us to do, we may pray for power that we may do it. 2. The will of God in his promises: what God hath said he will give, we may pray that we may receive. 3. The will of God in prophecies: what God hath foretold shall come to pass, we may and ought to pray that it ought to come to pass. The prayer of man gives birth to the prophecies of God, yea, and to the promises of God too. *Ezek. xxxvi. 37. I will be enquired of, to do it for them*. Though God be a sure paymaster, yet he expects that we should put his bond in suit before he pays. Learn, 3. That a prayer made according to God's will, shall certainly be granted according to our will. *If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us*. When we pray for any thing in obedience to God's will, and with submission to his will, we know that we have the petitions that we ask of him.

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. 17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

Our apostle informed us in the foregoing verse, of the comfort which believers have in their prayers for themselves, all that is requested by them is granted by God; now in the verse before us he relates the benefit which others receive by their prayers as well as themselves, assuring them, that if any of them did pray for an offending brother, they should be heard in what they desired, unless the person they prayed for had sinned the unpardonable sin, the *sin unto death*; by which we are to understand apostasy from the Christian religion unto idolatry, as appears from the following words, *Keep yourselves from idols*, which caution has no manner of dependence upon what went before, unless we understand the *sin unto death* in this sense: or if (with others) we call it the *sin against the Holy Ghost*, it comes to the same; for what is that sin but a renouncing of Christianity, denying the truth of the Christian faith, after illumination and conviction by the Holy Ghost, and maliciously persecuting the sincere professors of it! Here note, 1. That a believer is not to hide his eyes from observing, but may and ought to take notice of the sins and miscarriages of his brethren: *If a man see a brother sin*, which he cannot do if he neglect to observe him. Note, 2. That a believer discerning and observing the sin of his brother, may and

ought to pray for him. *Let him ask, that is, importune God on his behalf.* Note, 3. That a believer's prayers may prevail with God for us, when our own prayers will not prevail for ourselves. *Let him ask, and he shall give him life, temporal life at least, and upon his repentance and faith, eternal life also.* Note, 4. That the state of some wicked men may be such, that, were it certainly known, it might be a Christian's duty to cease praying for them. *There is a sin unto death, that is, which doth not only deserve death, as all sin doth, and bespeaks a person in a state of death, but a sin that argues a person to be twice dead, dead in respect of unregeneracy, and dead in respect of wilful and sinful apostasy. I do not say that ye shall pray for it, that is, for the person guilty of it, seeing God never intends to forgive it. Lord! how deplorable is the condition of those whose sins are past prayers, who give over praying for themselves, and others are stopped from praying for them! How sad is it when the Lord shuts up the hearts of any of his from praying for us! It shows the sin of that man to be apprehended as being the sin unto death, when the faithful cease praying for him. Yet note, 5. The apostle doth not here explicitly and simply forbid praying for such wretched persons, but only says, I do not say that ye shall pray for them; that is, I cannot give you any encouragement to pray for such, nor dare I promise you any good success in praying for them who have sinned unto death. I do not say; that is, I give you no warrant, I lay you under no command, I can give you no promise that your prayers for such shall be heard and answered.*

18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

That is, we are well assured that sincere Christians, who are begotten and born of God, do not commit this sin unto death, namely, apostasy from Christianity to the heathen idolatry. *But he keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not; that is, he preserveth himself from the contagion of idolatry, into which the devil was so busy to seduce a great part of mankind. It may be further added, that he that is born of God, so far as he is a partaker of the divine nature, sinneth not; that is, suffers not any sin to have dominion over him, but takes care to preserve himself, through the assistance of divine grace, from Satan's deadly wound. He toucheth him not; that is, doth*

not touch him so as to leave an impression of his devilish spirit upon him. *Non tangit tactu qualitativo, vel tactu lethali et mortifero; "He shall not mortally touch them, to make them sin unto death."*

19 And we know that we are of God.—

That is, do belong to the true God, and are worshippers of him: we are guided by his Spirit, we are obedient to his laws, we please him on earth, and do hope to enjoy him in heaven.

—And the whole world lieth in wickedness.

That is, the far greater part of the world are under the dominion of that wicked one, being sunk into idolatry, and become worshippers of the devil, continuing in the midst of their impurity and malignity, and wholly set upon mischief and wickedness. See here the darkness and horror of an unregenerate and unconverted state. Persons in it are under the dominion of Satan, that wicked one. But behold the blessed change that Christianity makes, not in the profession but in the practice of it; it delivers from the power of darkness, and from the power of Satan, the prince of darkness, and translates us into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. 21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

As if the apostle had said, "We Christians are better taught by our religion, to acknowledge and worship the only true God by his Son Jesus Christ, our only Mediator, and therefore exhort you to keep from idols;" intimating hereby that the worshipping of any other besides this only true God, and by any other Mediator, besides Jesus Christ, is idolatry. Or the words may be sensed thus: "We are sure that the Son of God is come, and that Christ is he, who by his doctrine and Spirit hath enlightened us to know the true and living God, whilst the greatest part of the world worship false gods, yea, adore the devil himself." And farther, *We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ; that is, we are by faith implanted into Jesus Christ, who is the author, purchaser, and disposer of eternal life, and therefore is true God. This text, which proves unde-*

niably the divinity of Christ, the Socinians pervert by applying these words, *this is the true God*, not to Christ, but to God the Father. But this makes the apostle guilty of a grand tautology, by saying, "The true God is the true God." Besides, it is here said of the same person, that he is the true God and eternal life. Now eternal life is thrice in this very chapter attributed to Jesus Christ, as the author and dispenser of it, verses 11, 12, 13. If then Christ be meant by *eternal life*, he must be also meant by *the true God*, for they are spoken of together, when the apostle says, *this is the true God and eternal life*. Lastly, our apostle

concludes his epistle with this cautionary direction, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols*. As if he had said, "My advice to you is as that of a father to his own children! having received by the gospel the knowledge of the true God, keep yourselves from idols, or false gods, of the heathen, among whom ye live; abandon all idolatry, superstition, sacrificing to idols, frequenting idol feasts, and all idolatrous communion, these things being inconsistent with the worship of the true God, and real Christianity. *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*"

THE
SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL

OF

S T. J O H N.

That St. John, the apostle and disciple of our Saviour, who wrote the First, did also write this Second Epistle, seems very evident from the exact agreement of several passages in this with the former Epistle, even word for word; and accordingly it has been agreed that the same person was the author of both Epistles.

But as touching the person to whom it was wrote, there have been different opinions; some think that it was a church whom he directs it to, under the title of the "Elect Lady;" and that some Jewish church, and particularly the church of Jerusalem, the mother of all, and from whence came forth the word to all other churches; the reason upon which this conjecture is grounded, is, because the rest of the Epistles, called catholic, were written to the Jews, (excepting that to Galus,) and therefore probably this was written to some Jewish church; and because all the Jewish churches received their spiritual things from the church of Jerusalem, she may therefore (say some) be fitly styled the Lady, as she was the mother of all other churches. Others conceive this Epistle to be wrote to a particular person, some eminent and religious matron, of a great estate, and a great reliever and supporter of the members of the church in her days. Which opinion of these two has the greater probability, is a matter of no great importance: let us rather attend to the subject-matter of this divine Epistle, which speaks thus:

THE elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; 2 For the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever. 3 Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Observe here, 1. The person writing and directing this epistle, St. John, styling himself *The Elder*, partly with respect to his age, he being, as it is thought, the only person at that time living upon the earth who bore the name of *an apostle*; and partly with respect to his office in the church: the word *elder* being a name of honour and dignity, we find both St. Peter elsewhere, and St. John here, making use of it. Observe, 2. The person to whom the epistle is directed, *The elect Lady and her children*; either some particular church, with its religious members according to some; or some honourable person of eminent piety and usefulness in the church,

according to others; and to her children, who had been religiously educated by her. Observe, 3. The solemn profession which he makes of the sincerity of his love to herself and her children, together with the ground and attractive cause of that his cordial affection to her and her's. *Whom I love in the truth, and for the truth's sake.* Mark, St. John here loved the lady for the truth's sake; but how many in our days love the truth for the lady's sake; I mean for sinister ends, and by-respects. It is a blessed thing when religion, and the grace of God shining in the lives of Christians, is the special loadstone of our love and affection toward them. *The elder to the Elect Lady, whom I love in the truth.* She had embraced the truth of the gospel, and he was confidently persuaded that she would continue in the profession and practice of it for ever. Observe, 4. The salutation sent to her and her children; namely, increase of grace, and an abundance of mercy and peace from God the Father, and Christ the Redeemer; earnestly wishing that they may continue steadfast in the profession of the truth, and in the exercise of love one to another: *Grace, mercy, and peace, from God*

the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father in truth and love.

4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

Observe here, 1. the person rejoicing, St. John, the apostle and minister of Christ Jesus, *I rejoiced greatly*. 2. The mercy rejoiced in, their *walking in the truth*. It was not their speculative knowledge of the truth, and their taking upon them a bare profession of Christianity, that he rejoiced in, but their *walking in the truth*, and framing their conversation according to the commandment which they had received from the Father. Christianity is not a speculative science, but a practical art of holy living; and the most exalted knowledge is insufficient to salvation, without a suitable and correspondent practice; therefore, says St. John here, *I rejoiced greatly to find of thy children, not barely professing of the truth, but walking in the truth*. Observe, 3. The persons rejoiced for, or in the behalf of; the youth in that church or family to which he now wrote, *I rejoiced to find thy children walking in the truth*; the hopes which the holy apostle had of a succession of saints, and that the children in his time would walk in their religious parents footsteps, was matter of singular joy and rejoicing to the blessed apostle. Yet observe, 4. With what caution, restriction, and limitation, our apostle speaks, *I rejoiced greatly to find of thy children*; that is, some of them, perhaps many of them, it is to be feared not all of them; to have seen all was no doubt the apostle's desire, but to find any was unquestionless matter of exceeding joy: *I rejoiced greatly to find of thy children walking in the truth*. Learn hence, That there is no greater joy to the ministers of Christ, than to see the youth, or rising generation, in their day, walking in the paths of holiness and religion, and treading in their religious parents' footsteps.

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

Observe here, The duty required, together with the profession of the gospel; namely, to live in unity and peace, in amity and concord, one with another. This he calls a *commandment*, in the singular number, to intimate that in this one commandment all the rest are contained, and in keeping this we keep all: and he tells them, it

is no new commandment, but an old one, from the beginning; it is as old as Moses, yea, as old as Adam, being a part of the law of nature written in Adam's heart; yet, in some respects, love may be called a *new commandment*, because urged from new motives, and enforced by a new example; and because it is never to wax old, but to be always fresh in the memories, and found in the practice of Christ's disciples, to the end of the world: *I write no new commandment, but what we had from the beginning, that we love one another*.

6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That (as we have heard from the beginning,) ye should walk in it.

As if our apostle had said, "By this we shall make it evidently appear that there is the true love of God in us, if we endeavour to frame our lives according to his commandments;" and this, he assures them, was the great commandment, which they heard from the beginning, when the gospel was first preached unto them, namely, that they should believe in Christ, and love one another, and constantly persevere in the practice of these duties. Learn hence, That as obedience is the natural effect and necessary product of love, so is it the best evidence, the surest mark and sign of it. *This is the love of God*; that is, the surest evidence that we love him, if we keep his commandments. Learn, 2. That it is not sufficient that we profess love to God and our neighbour, but we must walk in love, and be found in the exercise, yea, in the persevering exercise, of that grace and duty: *This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it*.

7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Having exhorted them to perseverance in the faith before, he subjoins a reason for that exhortation now, because many deceivers are entered into the world, &c. Many impostors were gone forth abroad, who denied, some the divinity, others the humanity of Christ, and so razed the very foundations of Christianity, and thus discovered themselves to be antichrists, or persons that set themselves to oppose Jesus Christ. Learn hence, That even from the beginning our Lord Jesus has had those who have disowned his natures, and denied his offices, the divinity of his person,

the meritoriousness of his satisfaction; these are antichrists, persons maliciously set against Christ, and they shall find him righteously set against them in the day when they shall be summoned by him solemnly to appear before him.

8 Look to yourselves, that we loose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

Here our apostle resumes his exhortation to them to constancy and perseverance in the faith and obedience of the gospel, from this argument, lest they should lose the fruit of their faith professed, the profit of their afflictions which for the sake of Christianity they had suffered, and their works of piety and charity which they have performed; but continuing faithful to the death, might receive a full reward, even a crown of life. Learn hence, That it is both lawful and needful, even for the best of saints in what they do in the service of God, to have an eye to the promised reward, by way of encouragement to them in the course of their obedience. We may with Moses have respect to the recompence of reward, but not only or chiefly, yet as a spur to provoke us to duty. Perseverance in goodness has its reward belonging to it; that reward has a fulness belonging to it, a fulness of compensation, and a fulness of satisfaction, and that it is both lawful and laudable to have an eye in our working to this full recompence of reward.

9 Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

Observe here, 1. The character given of the gospel, it is the doctrine of Christ: that is, the doctrine relating to Christ, and the doctrine taught by Christ. Observe, 2. What is affirmed of those that apostatize from, and abide not in, the doctrine of Christ, *they have not God*; that is, say some, they have not God to be their Father, nor the Spirit to be their guide and sanctifier; they have, say others, no knowledge of God, no interest in God, no influences of grace and holiness derived from God. Observe, 3. The happy condition of those that abide in the doctrine of Christ, *they have both the Father and the Son*: he that has one, hath both; and he that has not both, has neither: and this *having* may admit a threefold interpretation, thus; *he has the Father and the Son* by way of abode and inhabitation; he dwelleth in God, and

God in him; they have the Father and the Son with them by way of society and communion, *We will come unto them, and make our abode with them*. Lastly, They have the Father and the Son, by way of assistance and approbation; they have God to assist them, to accept them, to reward them.

10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. 11 For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.

In these words our apostle directs them how to carry themselves towards those wicked apostates and heretical seducers, that deny the gospel, or any essential part of Christianity; by no means to give any countenance or encouragement to them, or to hold any familiarity or communion with them, nor to entertain them, nor so much as courteously to salute them, but, by showing them disrespect, manifest a dislike and disapproving of their errors. This form of interdict, *Bid him not God speed*, seems to be an imitation of the Jewish practice towards excommunicated persons, who were not only excluded from all commerce, but also from all kind of common civilities, and ordinary salutation. Learn hence, That even civil courtesy, and common respect, is not, ought not, to be paid to those that seduce others, or attempt to seduce us, from the Christian faith.

12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. 13 The children of our elect sister greet thee. Amen.

Here our apostle concludes his epistle with an apology for the brevity of it, declaring, that he hoped to come shortly to them, and see them. And though he had many things to write, yet all things were not fit to be written: but, besides, a lively voice affects more than a written letter; and he hoped that they should be filled with mutual joy at the sight of, and converse with, each other. Presence of friends, and familiar converse with each other, is preferable to all writing to each other. By the children of the Elect Sister, some again understand the members of another church, who now sent salutations to them. The concluding word, *Amen*, imports his sincerity in what he had written to them, and his hearty wishes for the happiness and welfare of them.

THE
THIRD EPISTLE GENERAL

OF

ST. JOHN.

THE elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

Observe here, 1. The penman and writer of this epistle, St. John, who wrote the two former, as appears by agreement of them in words and phrases, which are peculiar to this apostle; he styles himself not an apostle, though he was so, but an *elder*; that word being a name of honour and dignity belonging to the chief of their tribes, agrees very well with the office of the apostles, set over the twelve tribes of the house of Israel. Observe, 2. The person to whom this epistle is directed, Gaius: we find three persons of this name in the New Testament, to wit, Gaius of Macedonia, *Acts. xix.* Gaius of Derbe, *Acts. xx.* and Gaius of Corinth, *Rom. xvi.* whom St. Paul calls his host, and of the whole church, who being eminent for his hospitality, especially to the ministers who went out to preach the gospel among the Gentiles, taking nothing of them; this man seems to be the person who had the honour of an epistle sent to him from the pen of an eminent apostle; such as do excel in their kindness to the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, have oft-times in this life some special marks of honour and respect put upon them by God, as a token of his gracious acceptance of them. Observe, 3. The interest which Gaius had in St. John's affections, he styles him *the well beloved Gaius*; and shows also what was the motive and attractive of that his love, namely, *the truth*, that is, the gospel of Christ, called eminently *the truth*; he loved Gaius in the truth, that is, in great sincerity, and for the truth, for his sincere professing and practising the doctrine of the gospel. *The elder unto*

the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth: such as love the truth are, and ought to be the special objects of our love.

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

Observe here, 1. This holy man, Gaius, who was so hospitable an host to the ministers and members of Christ, had but a weak and sickly body, and wanted health; strength of grace and dearness of respect, even from God himself, cannot prevail against diseases; such as are most holy are sometimes most weak and sickly. Observe, 2. That though Gaius had but a weak and consumptive body, yet had he a very thriving and vigorous soul; it is a very common, yet a very sad and true, observation, that men of strong, healthy, and active bodies, have weak, lame, sickly, and sinful souls. Ah, wretched sinner! when under obligations to serve thy God best, thou forgettest him most, and prostitutest thy health to the service of thy lusts: how does the health and ease of one day deserve the service and thankfulness of thy whole life! But, alas! instead of that, thou makest him to serve with thy sins, and layest the first fruits of thy time and strength upon the devil's altar. Observe, 3. Our apostle's wish on the behalf of Gaius, namely, that his body were as healthful as his soul was holy, that he had as much health in the one, as he had grace in the other; *I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.* Behold here, such an improved and well-grown Christian was this holy man Gaius, that our apostle makes the prosperous state of his soul

the measure of all that prosperity which the one could wish, or the other desire; as thy soul prospereth, so may thy bodily health, for the service of God and of thy soul.

3 For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Observe here, 1. The commendable testimony which the brethren that came from Gaius gave to St. John concerning his holy and unblamable conversation, according to the direction of the gospel. *The brethren testified of thee, that thou walkest in the truth*: good reports of our brethren, without detracting any thing from their worth, is a manifest duty. Observe, 2. With what joy and rejoicing St. John received the notices of Gaius' adherence to the truth, and of his answerable walking thereunto. *I rejoiced when the brethren came and testified of thee*; he did not envy the grace of God so largely conferred on Gaius, but rejoiced in it, and no doubt blessed God exceedingly for it: soul-mercies are the greatest mercies, and matters of the greatest joy to gracious souls. Observe, 3. That additional joy which St. John expresses to hear that *his children*, that is, those persons whom he had converted to Christianity, and begotten to Christ through the gospel, did *walk in the truth*, that is, in the sincere practice as well as in the outward profession of religion: *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth*; the faithful ministers of Christ rejoice more in the welfare of their people's souls, than in all their worldly wealth or honour.

5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers: 6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church; whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: 7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.

Observe here, How our apostle at once commends the great charity of Gaius, and at the same time excites him to the farther

practice of it. Where note, 1. How charity towards Christians is here styled fidelity to Christ, because shown to them upon Christ's account: *Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren*. Acts of charity are acts of righteousness and fidelity? he that is uncharitable is unjust. Note, 2. The extensive nature of Gaius's charity; it was to brethren, yet not only to brethren but to strangers; that is, not only to the brethren of the church with him, but to strangers in their travels to and fro, as they came near him; but more particularly to such faithful ministers as came out of foreign parts to preach the gospel, whom Gaius had hospitably and charitably entertained. Note, 3. How he exhorts Gaius farther to furnish and help these ministers in their travels with all things necessary for their journey; because, 1. They preached the gospel freely, taking nothing of the Gentile Christians for their pains. 2. Because it was for Christ's name sake they went abroad: to preach the gospel, say some; to avoid persecution, say others. 3. Because to entertain such, is to further, as much as in us lies, the propagation of the gospel of Christ: such as contribute towards the maintenance and support of the ministers of Christ for his sake, shall have the present comfort and future reward of co-operating and contributing their parts towards the propagating and spreading of the gospel of Christ.

9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. 10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and, not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

Observe here, 1. The pious care which St. John took for the relief and succour of such faithful Christians as now travelled amongst them, both to avoid persecution, and to preach the gospel; he wrote to the church on their behalf, desiring their reception, and advising their relief; *I wrote to the church*, that is, I wrote for them, and sent my testimonial to the church on their behalf; every one has a pen to plead for himself, happy he that has both tongue and pen to intercede for others. Observe, 2. The opposition which St. John met with in so good a work; Diotrephes, a proud

man, regarded not his letters, acknowledged not his authority, yea, slighted the apostle, *prating against him with malicious words*: the holiest men may meet with opposition in the holiest and best of actions, wherein the glory of God and the public good are most concerned. *I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes received us not.* Observe, 3. The holy apostle's resentment of this indignity, and wise resolution thereupon: *When I come, I will remember his deeds*: that is, I will sharply rebuke him, and use that severity towards him which his crime deserves, according to the authority which God has given me. Learn hence, That though private offences against Christ's ministers must be forgiven and forgotten by them, yet when an offence is prejudicial to the church, it must be opposed, and openly censured.

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Here St. John advises his beloved Gaius, and those with him, not to imitate and follow this evil example of Diotrephes, (who not only refused charity towards the Christian Jews that wanted it, himself, but would not permit the Gentile Christians to receive them or relieve them,) but to follow the example of God, who is good to all; and, accordingly, he that is merciful is born of God, but he that is malicious hath no true knowledge of God, but is a mere stranger to him. Behold here the eulogy and high commendation which the Spirit of God gives to charitable and good men: *He that doeth good is of God*, he is allied to heaven, born of God, and his offspring: but the uncharitable evil man is a composition of

spite, envy, and malice, born from beneath, and the devil's offspring.

12 Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself; yea, and we also bear record: and ye know that our record is true.

Having propounded the example of God in the former verse, he propounds in this the example of Demetrius, as a pattern to them for their imitation in works of piety and charity; not only common report, and the apostle's testimony, but his own good works, did justly recommend him as an extraordinary pattern to their imitation. Note, That the commendations, which our own good works do give us before the world, are more valuable than all the praises and applauses which can be given to us by men, yea, by the best of men. *Demetrius has a good report of all men, yea, of the truth itself.*

13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: 14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

Thus our apostle concludes his epistle with an apology for the brevity of it, hoping in a short time to see him, and to speak face to face unto him; he concludes with his apostolic valediction, *Peace be to thee*; unto which adding the brethren's salutations, it teaches us, that kind remembrances and greetings are suitable to Christian friendship: *Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.*

THE
EPISTLE GENERAL
OF
S T. J U D E.

The design and scope of this Epistle appears to be much the same with that of the Second of St. Peter, and was written probably about the same time; the intent of both is this, namely, to fortify the Christian Jews against the errors and corruptions of those seducers, who by their wicked lives, and worse doctrines, attempted to seduce persons from the plainness and simplicity of the gospel, and to bring upon them the same condemnation and judgment with themselves.

JUDE, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and* called: 2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

Here we have observable, the person saluting, the persons saluted, and the salutation itself. Observe, 1. The person saluting described three ways. 1. By his name, *Jude*, called Thaddeus and Lebbeus, to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot. Behold, an holy apostle, and a perfidious traitor, bearing the same name; Judas an apostle, and Judas an apostate: it is not an holy name, but an holy nature, that commends us unto God. 2. By his office, a *servant of Jesus Christ*: he might have styled himself a near kinsman of Jesus Christ, or a brother of the Lord; but he mentions not his natural, but his spiritual relation to Christ: alliance in faith, or a spiritual relation to Christ, is much dearer and nearer than alliance in flesh: there is a peculiar honour and excellency in the title of Christ's servant, above that of Christ's kinsman. 3. By his kindred and alliance, *brother of James*: this is added to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot: it is the duty of the servants, but especially the ministers, of Christ, to prevent all scandalous exceptions against their persons, and to be of untainted reputations: *Jude, the servant of Christ, and brother of James*. Observe, 2. The persons saluted: these also are three ways described. 1. *They are sanctified by God the father*; The apostle

judges of them by their profession, and by their obligation; they had, by assuming the Christian name, obliged themselves to be saints or holy persons; and by their profession did own and declare themselves so to be; and no doubt many of them were inwardly sanctified, as well as outwardly holy. 2. *They are preserved in Christ Jesus*; that is, in the faith of Christ Jesus, when many for fear of persecution have apostatized from it: he that will approve himself a true Christian, must show himself a steadfast Christian; instability is an argument of insincerity. Again, *preserved in Christ Jesus*, that is, preserved in a state of grace and holiness, by Christ Jesus, by the merit of his death and passion, by the prevalence of his intercession, and by the Holy Spirit's efficacy and operation. 3. *They are called*, all of them externally, by the ministry of the word; internally, many of them, by the effectual operation of the Spirit, renewing the nature, and reforming the life; these are the persons saluted, *them that are sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Christ Jesus, and called*. Observe, 3. The salutation itself, *Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied unto you*; mercy from God, the Father of mercies; peace from Jesus Christ, who is our peace; and love from the Holy Ghost, by whom it is shed abroad in our hearts: and his praying that these graces may not be barely given and granted, but be multiplied and increased, intimates to us our duty, which is, not barely to seek grace at the hands of God, but the multiplication and augmentation of it; to labour after grace in growth, as well as grace in truth. *Mercy, peace, and*

love, be multiplied; thankful we may and ought to be for the least measures of good received, but not satisfied with the greatest measures, short of our heavenly perfection; he was never truly good that does not desire daily to grow better.

3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Observe here, 1. A courteous and loving compellation, *Beloved*; people should study to render themselves fit objects of their pastor's love. Observe, 2. How his love towards them put him upon writing to them with all diligence: love must be the spring and fountain of all our ministerial performances; all services without love, are as sacrifices without fire. Christ first enquired after Peter's love, before he urged him to labour; God will reward no services to our people, but what have been done in love. Observe, 3. The excellency and weightiness of the subject about which he was to write, it was concerning the *common salvation*; so called, not as if it were a salvation common to all persons, good and bad; but because common to all believers, who have a joint title to it, and a common interest in it; the salvation which the gospel reveals, is a common salvation; it is common in regard of the purchaser of it, Christ, our common Saviour; in regard of the price paid for it, the precious blood of Christ; in regard to the way and means by which it is obtained and secured, and that is *faith*; and in regard of the earnest of it, and longings after it, the Holy Spirit of God is common to all believers, and gives them a pledge, an earnest of, and sets them a breathing after and longing for, this salvation. Observe, 4. The exhortation itself, *Earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints*, that is, for the sincere doctrine of the gospel delivered by Christ. *Once delivered*; that is, once for all, so as never to be changed or altered more, no new rule of faith is evermore to be expected; and therefore the articles of faith added to the apostle's creed by the council of Trent, can be no articles of Christian faith, because never delivered by Christ or his apostles, and never known to many Christians long after their decease. Learn, That it is the duty of Christians at all times, but especially in times of error and seduction, to contend earnestly for that pure and un-

corrupted faith which is contained in the gospel.

4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here we have a reason of the foregoing exhortation assigned, why we should contend so earnestly for the Christian faith once delivered by Christ to his apostles, because there were crept, by little and little, such seducers into the church, as would endeavour to adulterate and corrupt it: *There are certain men crept in unawares*. Note here, That corruptors and corruptions creep secretly and gradually into the church; and heretics do not broach all their errors and false doctrines at once; vain then and frivolous is the question which the church of Rome asks us, *When* did their innovations and false doctrines come first into the church? They crept in, and that unawares; it is enough for us that we find them there, though we assign not the time when, nor the manner how, they did come in. Observe next, The character and description which our apostle gives of these seducers crept in amongst them. 1. He tells us they were men fore-ordained to condemnation; mark, not fore-ordained to seduction to sin, but to condemnation for sin; the word rendered *fore-ordained*, signifies before written, or before prophesied of, by Enoch and others, that they would by their great sins and impieties fall into that condemnation which God hath ordained as a just reward to their transgressions; God never ordaineth or decreeth any man's sin, but he decreeth and foretelleth their condemnation for sin. 2. He styles them *wicked, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness*; pointing at the Nicolaitans, Gnostics, and other impure heretics, that sprang from Simon Magus, who made the doctrine of the free grace of God, discovered in the gospel, a cloak for their looseness and lasciviousness. Errors in doctrine are usually accompanied with corruption in manners, as being most suitable to man's corrupt, vile nature, and will be sure never to want followers. 3. He charges them with *denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ*; that is, Jesus Christ our only Master, God, and Lord, called by St. Peter, *the Lord that bought them*: lessening the dignity of his person, and invalidating what they could the merit of his death and suf-

serings. Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ, the Master of the world, the Lord of the church, is truly God; he is called the great God, and the mighty God, to show that he is not a God inferior to, but equal to, the Father, and that by nature, not by office. Learn, 2. That it is an horrid impiety to deny our Lord Jesus Christ, to deny him in either of his natures, or in any of his offices; to deny him either in opinion, or in practice, is a sin that carries a prodigious appearance with it: *They denied the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

In this, and the following verses, our apostle, to deter them from following the pernicious ways of these seducers, sets before them the several examples of God's judgments inflicted in former times upon persons guilty of such crimes as these seducers were stigmatized for, and guilty of; he begins with the Israelites in the wilderness; as they perished through unbelief, after they were brought out of Egypt, so shall revolvers perish, notwithstanding their baptism, and fair beginnings. Learn hence, 1. That God's judgments inflicted on some, are, and ought to be, warnings unto all. 2. That God's ancient judgments were ordained to be our warnings and examples; his holiness is the same as ever, his justice the same, his hatred of sin the same, and his power to revenge it the same as ever; his judgments now may be more spiritual, but they are not less terrible. Learn, 3. That unbelief will as certainly bring destruction upon Christians now, as it did upon the Israelites of old. Did God destroy them that believed not his power then? no less will he destroy them that believe not his power now.

6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.

The next example set before them, is that of the apostate angels, who for their rebellion against God were thrown down from heaven, and are reserved as so many prisoners in chains of darkness, to the judgment of the great day, when their condition will be more miserable than now it is. Now, if God did not spare apostatizing

angels, surely he will not spare apostatizing seducers. Note here, 1. The sin of the angels; they left their first state, namely, their state of holiness. 2. Their punishment; they left their own habitation, they departed from that place of happiness and glory which before they enjoyed; when they changed their nature, they changed their place: the presence of an holy God, is no place for unholy persons. Note 3. That the angels are kept in chains, and those chains are everlasting; the chain of God's eternal decree holds them; the chain of their own guilt holds them; the chain of utter despair eternally holds them. Note, 4. That the day of judgment will be a great day, and at that day the punishment of fallen angels will be far greater than now it is; when heaven's joys are full, then hell's torments will be full, and not before.

7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Another example of God's severity against sin and sinners, is Sodom and Gomorrah, Adma and Zeboim, who giving themselves up to the lusts of uncleanness, were in an extraordinary manner destroyed by fire from heaven, which was a forerunner of that eternal fire of hell, which they are to suffer to all eternity, and so may and ought to be a terrifying example and timely warning to all persons, that they fall not into the like sins. Learn, 1. That the sin of uncleanness doth exceedingly displease and provoke God to punish above other sins, because it defiles both soul and body; it makes a sty of a temple: and because it is a sin usually accompanied with final impenitency, "none that go into her return:" that is, very few. Whoredom is a deep ditch, the abhorred of God do fall into it. Learn, 2. That the sin of uncleanness is remarkably followed with vengeance, even with eternal vengeance: God returns flames for flames, and revenges the fire of lust with the fire of hell.

8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

As if our apostle had said, "Notwithstanding these fore-mentioned examples of God's vengeance upon the unclean Sodomites, and others, yet these heretical seducers, whom he calls dreamers, because they vented their own dreams and phantasies, instead of God's truth, did defile them

selves with their filthy practices, teaching that by their Christian liberty they were freed from all civil subjection, speaking evil of those who were set in authority over them. Here observe, 1. That the doctrines which seducers bring, are not the truths of Christ, but their own dreams. Dreams they are in point of opinion, and dreams they will be found in point of expectation; they promise much, but perform nothing. 2. That dreams of error, or heretical principles, do dispose towards filthy and unclean practices. *Filthy dreamers defile the flesh.* Avoid error in judgment, if you would escape filthiness in conversation. 3. That lust loves not restraint, libertines despise dominion, sensuality makes men unruly; such are sons of Belial, they cast off the yoke. 4. That such as despise government speak evil of governors: dignities lie open to the lash of the tongue; neither power nor innocency can protect from calumny and imputations, from slander and false accusation: *These filthy dreamers despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.*

9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, (he disputed about the body of Moses,) durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

Our apostle in the preceding verse having charged seducers with contemptuous speaking against governors and government, in this verse he aggravates the impudence and impiety of it, by the carriage of Michael the archangel towards the devil. The argument is taken from the greater to the less, and lies thus: if Michael, an archangel, so excellent in nature, so high in office, contending with Satan, an impure spirit, yet used great modesty, without the least indecency of expression towards him; who and what are those that despise dominions, and dare speak evil of dignities? Hence observe, That it is our duty to learn the angelic lesson; namely, not to give railing or reviling language to the worst adversary in the best cause, because it proceeds from pride or passion, and because so contrary to the temper and design of Christianity; much more is it our duty to watch against the sins of the tongue, with respect to our governors and superiors, remembering it is written, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the rulers of thy people.*

10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not; but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

A double crime is here charged upon these seducers by our apostle, namely, pride, in speaking evil of things they know not; and wickedness, in abusing the knowledge they had. 1. Their sin was great in speaking evil of what they did not know, they reviled dignities and magistrates, the usefulness of whom they knew not, and possibly condemned the mysteries of the Christian faith, which they understand not, notwithstanding they called themselves Gnostics, and pretended to higher degrees and larger measures of knowledge than other men. Learn, That truth is usually slandered by ignorant and conceited men; because men do not understand the things of God, therefore they do condemn them. 2. Their wickedness was great in abusing the knowledge that they had, and in acting contrary to it. What they knew naturally, or by the light of nature, to be sinful in those things, as brute beasts, did they corrupt and defile themselves. Here note, 1. That where sin reigneth, it turneth men into brute beasts, *Psalm* xlix. 12. Hence they are compared to dogs for filthiness, to swine for uncleanness, to wolves for cruelty; of the two it is worse to be like a beast, than to be a beast: the beast is what God has made it; but he that is like a beast, is what sin and the devil has made him. 2. That it is a sign of a man turned to a beast, to follow the lusts and passions of corrupt nature. *Like brute beasts they corrupt themselves.* It is just with God to leave them to be led by sense, who will not be guided by grace, and to suffer them to fall into the ditch of beastly sensuality, who forget that they are men.

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

Our apostle goes on charging these seducers with several crimes; particularly with the malice and envy of Cain, with the sordid covetousness of Balaam, with the sedition and gainsaying of Core: they hate their brethren, and so are murderers like Cain; they have adulterated the truth for base gain, and so have followed the example of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; and as Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, rose up against Moses and Aaron, so they seditiously opposed both magistracy and ministry. Learn hence, 1. That the practice of wicked men now, and from the beginning, is still the same. 2. That Satan entices his slaves to divers sins; to the malices of Cain, to the covetousness of

Balaam, to the sedition of Core. 3. That such as sin now may read their destruction in the destruction of those that sinned before them, *Woe unto them! they have gone in the way of Cain, and perished, &c.*

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: *clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruits withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; 13* Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame: wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Our apostle having set forth these seducers in the foregoing verses by sundry examples, he now comes to set them forth by several similitudes and resemblances. **1.** He calls them spots in their love-feasts, (the infamy of their lives being a blemish and scandal to their Christian assemblies,) feeding without fear either of offending God or man. **2.** He calls them clouds without water, promising rain, but yielding none; making a show of knowledge, but indeed having none; and they are driven (as clouds by the wind) from one vanity to another. **3.** Trees they are, but like them in autumn which have neither leaves nor fruit: nay, trees twice dead, in sin before conversion, and in respect of their apostasy after their conversion, and so shall be plucked up by the roots. **4.** They are like raging waves of the sea, turbulent and tumultuous, foaming out at their mouths the filthiness and impurity that boileth in their hearts. **5.** Wandering stars, or teachers unstable, departing from the true faith once delivered to them; but for these illuminated and knowing teachers is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, **15** To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

The apostle having described the sin of the seducers in the former verses, declares the certainty of their destruction in the verses now before us; assuring us that

Enoch of old, by the spirit of prophecy, did foretell the sins of such persons, and their condemnation also at the general judgment, when Christ shall come gloriously attended, to execute judgment upon the ungodly in general, and on such as speak contumeliously of him and his in particular. Here note, **1.** That the doctrine of the day of judgment is very ancient, foretold by the prophets from the beginning. Man was made an accountable creature, capable of rendering an account of his actions: and the sentence of death, denounced in paradise against him for his sin, did necessarily imply it; the drowning of the world, and burning of Sodom, were both types and forerunners of it: though there are Atheists upon earth that do not believe a future judgment to come, there are none in hell: feeling and experience must teach some men that which the Spirit, scripture, reason, and conscience, could never learn them. *Enoch prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh.* Note, **2.** How Enoch here prefixeth a note of incitement to his prophecy, *Behold, the Lord cometh to judgment!* implying, that great is our natural backwardness to believe and mind the coming of Christ to judgment; and intimating, that we should always realize the day of our Lord to ourselves, and represent it to our thoughts as certain, and near at hand. Note, **3.** How royally attended Christ will come to judgment: *Behold, he cometh with ten thousand of his saints.* Christ will be attended only with holy ones at the last day; such as meet him now in purity, shall meet him then in peace. How cheerfully then may saints think of the last judgment, and observe the number of his attendants! Not a few saints, but ten thousand of them. *Rev. v. 11.* They are called a number which no man can number. This is a comfort against the paucity and small number of those that are now upright with God; in heaven we shall have company enough: God's family when it comes together, will be very numerous, or rather innumerable, *Heb. xii. 23.* Observe, **4.** The work of Christ at the day of judgment, namely, to convince and judge. Conscience shall then have an exact view of all that sinners did and said: sin will find them out, and testify against them at Christ's tribunal; and whom conscience has convinced, Christ will condemn, and whom he has condemned, he will execute. Observe, **5.** The persons whom Christ will convince and judge, *the ungodly.* The process of the last day lies chiefly, though not only, against the ungodly; these shall not stand in the judgment, because ungodliness doth chiefly provoke; not but that unrighteous

ness will then be condemned also, *Rom. i. 18*, and sinners sent to hell for neglecting the duties of the second table no less than the first. Observe, 6. That not only the deeds of ungodly men, but their words, especially their *hard speeches* against God and his children, shall be brought into judgment. A wicked tongue is a rugged tongue; it speaks words sharper than swords: pray we for wisdom to make as good an use of the reproaching tongue of an enemy, as of the reproving tongue of a friend; that the sword of the tongue may let out the corruption that is in our hearts, and do us good against the will, and contrary to the intention, of our enemy.

16 *These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.*

Our apostle having asserted in the former verse, that Christ will at the great day convince and judge all the ungodly; in this verse he declares that these seducers were of the number of the ungodly, whom Christ will certainly judge, because they were *murmurers, complainers*, discontented with, and always complaining of, their lot and present condition; because they had not as much as they desired, they murmured against God, as if they had nothing; *walking after their own lusts*, contrary to the restraint of nature, and the laws of God: *their mouth speaking great swelling words*. It has been the constant course of heretics to speak high, and talk big, like mountebanks, hoping thereby to set off and put off the better their counterfeited and false wares; he is no wise man, whom great swelling words will seduce from the ways of wisdom. Not the words of the speaker, but the weight of what is spoken, is to be minded; yet though they talked these swelling words to their inferiors, at the same time they could flatteringly admire the passions and actions of others, from whom they expected any benefit or advantage: *having men's persons in admiration because of advantage*. Now from the whole of this large character, which St. Jude here gives of these heretical seducers and false teachers, we learn that miserable and most deplorable is the condition of the misled followers of seducing teachers; the seducer follows his lust, and the follower is led by the seducer. Here the blind leads the blind; God pity them both; When teachers offer themselves to us, we should consider who leads them who are so offi-

cious to lead us, and follow them only as they follow Christ; no wise man will set his watch by the clock, but by the sun.

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; 18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. 19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the spirit.

Having largely described those seducers, our apostle now comes to exhort those to whom he wrote to *beware* of them, assuring them that the apostles of Christ, St. Paul, and particularly St. Peter, had expressly foretold of those wicked scoffers that would arise in the church in the last times; which mockers and scoffers he shows were such as without any just cause separated themselves from the church's communion, pretending greatly to sanctity, but addicted to sensuality, and destitute of the Holy Spirit. Note here, 1. That the scripture speaks much of the sin and sinners that should be found in the latter times; we ought not therefore to be troubled at what is foretold, nor be unarmed when we are so often forewarned. It is a shame for them, who have oft heard and known the doctrines of the apostles, to be surprised by the seducers. St. Jude expects that these Christians, who know what the apostles had delivered, should vigorously oppose all seducers and seduction. Learn, 2. That a causeless separation from a church of which we are members, is culpable and sinful: a separation from corruptions, and a separation from them that are corrupt, are two distinct things; the former is always a duty, the latter not so. Learn, 3. That those that separate from the assemblies of the faithful, are unusually *sensual*, and *have not the Spirit*; they have not the spirit, either to guide them, or to quicken them, or to comfort them. *These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.*

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, 21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Our apostle having, in the former part of this chapter, warned the Christians of the danger of seducers, he closes his epistle with directions and advice how they

may be preserved from seduction, and what means they should use for their perseverance and establishment in the doctrine of Christ. First, he directs them to *build up themselves in their most holy faith*; that is, in the doctrine of faith contained in the gospel. Where note, 1. The faith of Christians is a most holy faith; holy in its principles, holy in its pattern, holy in its encouragements and rewards. 2. That it is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour, of every Christian to build up himself, and others also, in the faith of the gospel; the best way for Christians not to be losers of what they have, is to be labourers for what they want; progress in Christianity is the best means to preserve us from apostasy. Secondly, He exhorts to prayer, *Praying in the Holy Ghost*; that is, with holy reverence, with humble confidence, with fervent importunity, with those holy affections and desires which the Spirit of God excite in us; the concurrence of the Holy Spirit is necessary both to assistance and acceptance in prayer; it enables us to pray in faith and love, with sincerity and importunity; without the Spirit there is no acceptable praying, and without prayer vain is the pretence to the Spirit. Breathing is the first evidence of life: St. Paul was no sooner converted, but behold he prayed. Thirdly, He directs that they *keep themselves in the love of God*; no such way to keep ourselves from error, as to preserve ourselves in that love which God bears to us, and in that love we bear to him; take we care that there is no intermission in the acts of love, and no remission of the degrees of love, but that we be rooted and grounded in love, and then we are proof against seducers and false teachers. Fourthly, he directs them to look up to heaven, if they would be steady and steadfast in the faith here on earth. *Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.* Here observe, That heaven, or eternal life, is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mercy it is called, because bestowed on the miserable, that could never merit or deserve it, and because it is the effect and fruit of free and special mercy, and because bestowed on the vessels of mercy, and because it is the perfection and consummation of all mercy; and it is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, because he purchased it, he prepared it, he exhibits and gives it. Observe farther, That Christians are to look for eternal life, as the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, to believe it, to meditate upon it, to have ardent desires after it, and patiently to wait for it: *Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

22 And of some have compassion, making a difference; 23 And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire;—

In these words our apostle directs them how to carry and behave themselves toward those who were seduced, in order to their recovery, namely, after a different manner. 1. He advises to Christian lenity and gentleness, to compassion and tenderness towards some: *Of some have compassion.* Learn thence, that though reproofs are to be given to backsliders, yet must they be given in compassion, and with holy grief. Our words must have bowels in them, and proceed not from passion, but from pity. 2. For those that are more entangled, corrupted, and hardened in their errors, he advises that they endeavour to *save them with fear*; that is, terrify them with the fear of God's judgments and wrath, and by sharp admonitions recover them out of their errors, as Lot was snatched out of the fire of Sodom. There is a time when severity is not only useful, but absolutely necessary, yet necessity must be the mother of severity. Lenity must be first used; if that fails, severity must succeed.

—Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

By this the apostle means every thing that doth defile, though in the least degree; he forbids all affinity and nearness to the errors and vices of these sinners, implying that some sinners are so filthy and unclean, that there is no keeping company with them without defilement; and intimating that Christians in their conversing with erroneous or vicious persons, whom they labour to recover, should take great care that they be not corrupted nor debauched by them, they being only to deal with them as physicians, not as companions. *Hating the garment spotted with the flesh.*

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle shuts up his exhortation with prayer; having exhorted them to duty, he commends them to the divine grace, intimating, that the fruit of all must be expected from God, without whose blessing all exhortations and endeavours will nothing avail. Observe, 2. The person who is the object of prayer and praise, Christ, described by his power: 1. *He is able to keep us from falling*; that is, from apostasy: he speaks not of his abso-

lute power, so Christ is able to keep us from all sin, but of such a power as is engaged by promise and office; all believers are Christ's charge, and he will preserve them from final destruction. 2. *He is able to present us faultless.* It is Christ's office to preserve his church until he presents it spotless to the Father, *before the presence of his glory*; that is, at his glorious appearance, when he shall come to judge the world with *exceeding joy*; on both sides, no doubt, both on Christ's part and ours. O sweet interview betwixt Christ and believers! he will joy to see us, as well as we rejoice to see him. Learn, That Christ will one day make a solemn presentation of his people unto God. 2. That when he doth present them, he will present them faultless. 3. That the day in which he does present them, will be a very glorious day in itself, and a very joyful day to all his people; when the impenitent world howl, they shall triumph.

25 To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Our apostle shuts up his epistle (as is usual) with a doxology; where observe, 1. The person to whom the praise is given, to God, the wise God, the only wise God, so called because he is originally and independently wise; because he is infinitely and transcendantly wise; all the wisdom

of the wisest of men is nothing in opposition to his wisdom, nor in comparison with it. Observe, 2. That Jesus Christ our Saviour is worthy to be accounted the only wise God; as he is God, he is called *the wisdom of the Father*; and in the book of the Proverbs, he is represented under that title, and spoken of as a person, ch. viii. As he was man, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were found in him, he received the habits of all created knowledge and wisdom, together with all other graces without measure. Observe, 3. As the person described to whom the praise is given, so the description of the praise which is given to this person, *Glory and majesty, dominion and power*; by which understand, the greatness and eminent excellency of the divine nature, which results from his perfections, and whereby the divine nature is infinitely exalted above all other beings. Learn hence, That we ought to have such a sense of God's transcendent excellences and perfections as may oblige us to ascribe all things that are honourable and glorious to him, therefore are so many words here used. Observe, 4. The duration, *now and ever*. Learn thence, That believers have such large and vast desires for the exaltation of God's glory, that they would have him glorified everlastingly, and without ceasing, not only in the present, but to eternal ages. To him be glory now and ever. Amen.

THE
R E V E L A T I O N
 OF
ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

The title of this book is the Revelation, so called, because it contains in general a discovery of such secrets, as no wisdom of man could have manifested or foreseen; and in particular reveals such divine things concerning the state of the Church, which before lay hid in the purpose and counsel of God. Concerning this book, Observe, 1. The penman that wrote it, St. John, the Apostle and Evangelist, (as it is believed,) the disciple whom Jesus loved; his hand held the pen, whilst the Spirit of God indited the mysterious matter of this book. Observe, 2. The time when, and the place where, he received the commandment to write what he wrote; the place was in the Isle of Patmos, into which it is said that St. John was banished by the emperor Domitian, and there received and wrote this Revelation, after he had, by a miraculous providence, escaped death at Rome, being there put into a caldron of burning oil. As to the time when he had his commandment to write, he tells us, it was on the Lord's day, chap. 1. verse 10. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard a voice, saying, What thou seest, write in a book." The more conscientious we are in observing our Lord's day, and the more zealous and fervent in the religious duties of it, the more receptive we are of divine favours, and the better qualified for receiving discoveries from God: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;" that is, devoutly worship and perform their duty to him. Observe, 3. The persons to whom this Epistle and Prophecy is written, namely, to all the servants of God in general, and to the seven churches of Asia in particular, to remain a perfect record for the use of the Church to all succeeding ages, the state of the universal church militant being herein laid open. Observe lastly, The authority of what is here written, it is the revelation of Christ Jesus, chap. xiii. "I Jesus have sent my angel to testify these things unto the churches;" that is, for the instruction and consolation of the church in all ages are these things written; ver. 7. "And blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book;" from whence we may infallibly gather, that it is the mind and will of God, that this book should be read by the church in all ages, and by all her members; for how can they keep the words of this prophecy, except they know them? How can they know them, except they read them, and study them? Add to this, that besides the prophetic part of this work, there is such a spirit of holiness breathing through it, the main articles of the Christian faith so clearly and plainly held forth in it, and many religious and moral duties so strictly enjoined by it, that it is the unquestionable duty of the ministers of God to study this book with that modesty and sobriety which becomes them, as enquirers, and likewise the people's duty to give themselves to the reading of it with fervent prayer, and a simplicity of mind to be guided by it as becomes learners.

CHAP. I.

THE revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: 2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

That is, "This revelation God the Father gave to Christ his Son, as Mediator, and therewith a commission to impart it to his faithful servants, especially the ministers of his church, and particularly to St.

John, who bare record in his gospel, and in his epistles, that Jesus Christ was the essential and eternal Word of God, and also bare record of the *testimony of Christ*, that is, of his doctrine and miracles, of his death and sufferings; declaring *all things that he saw*, namely, in his visions, and as they were represented to him." Here note, 1. The favour granted to St. John, he had a vision or revelation of future things. Revelations from God were sometimes by visions, sometimes by voice, and sometimes by dreams: this revelation which John had, was of a mixed nature, partly by vision, and partly by voice. Note, 2. The primary author of this revelation, God the Father, the first Person in the Trinity, he revealed it; *The revelation which God gave.* Note, 3.

The order in which God gave forth this revelation; first, it is given to Christ, *The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him*: next unto the angel, then unto St. John, to reveal it to the church. Christ, as God, knew all things from eternity, but as man and mediator he received this revelation from God the Father, and imparted it by the angel to his servant John; we see then that Christ, in his state of exaltation, continues to execute his prophetic office, by revealing to his servants the mind and will of God. Note, 4. The subject-matter of the revelation, *Things which should shortly come to pass*; mark, not things which were already past, (then this book had been an history, and not a prophecy,) but which should certainly and suddenly come to pass; that is, they should shortly begin to be accomplished, and to take effect; not that they should all be immediately performed, but in God's time, in respect of whose eternity a thousand years are but as one day. Note lastly, The fidelity and great integrity of St. John, in the making known to others *all things that he saw*; that is, he had by his writings told the churches what Christ by his angel told him, even all that he heard and saw in this vision, as St. Paul did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, *Acts. xx.* (he doth not say he hath declared the whole council of God, for who but God himself could declare that!) So St. John here *bare record of the whole word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw and heard.*

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand.

Observe here, that great encouragement which the spirit of God gives to all Christians to read and regard, to consider and meditate upon the things contained in this divine book, that is, the necessary parts of Christianity, which are here mixed with darker passages; all must read, study, and practise these, that hope for blessedness: *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein.* Hence note, That although the book of the Revelation be in itself a very abstruse and mysterious part of holy scripture, yet Christians ought not to be debarred, much less to debar themselves, from reading of it, and consulting with it: *blessed is he that readeth*, that is, attentively, understandingly, and affectionately; and *blessed is he*

that keepeth the things that are written, that is, in his mind and memory, in his affection and practice, so as to adhere to the truth, whatever trials and temptations it may expose him to.

4 JOHN to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne: 5 And from Jesus Christ, *who is the faithful Witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.*

Observe here, 1. The persons to whom St. John writes, and the particular churches which he does salute, namely, the seven churches of Asia, which were then the most famous and flourishing churches in the Christian world, but now overrun with barbarism. Sin has laid the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing churches and kingdoms. Observe, 2. The apostolical salutation given to these churches, *Grace be unto you, and peace*; by grace understand the free favour and rich love of God in pardoning, sanctifying, and saving; and by peace, the inward sense of that love, and all outward mercies and temporal blessings whatsoever. Observe, 3. The persons in whose name, or from whom this salutation is sent and given; 1. From God the Father, who is described by his eternity and immutability, *which is, which was, and which is to come.* 2. From the seven Spirits which are before the throne: that is, from the Holy Ghost, who is thus described in regard of the perfection and variety of his gracious operations: the Holy Spirit is called *seven*, because he is perfect in working; and he is said to be before the throne, because continually present with God, and ready to perform what is needful for the church of God. 3. From Jesus Christ, who is described according to the threefold office, of a *prophet, priest, and king*; his being called *the true and faithful witness*, points out his prophetic office, that he is the great prophet of his church, who reveals the will of the Father fully and faithfully to the sons of men; his being styled *the first begotten of the dead*, points out his priestly office, and intimates that he died, that he rose again from the dead, and that he first arose, or was the first begotten from the dead; that is, the first that arose from the dead by his own power, to a state of immortality, and never to die more; some indeed rose before him, but then they were raised by him, he was the

first that ever raised himself: others were raised from the dead, as Lazarus, before Christ, but they died again; whereas Christ rose from the dead never to die more; he entered into a state of immortality after his resurrection, and lives for ever to make intercession for us. Lastly, Christ is styled *the prince of the kings of the earth*, which phrase shows both his influence upon them, (as giving laws and rules unto them,) and their dependence upon him, who do receive their power and government, their protection and dominion, all from his hand.

—Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

In the former verse our Saviour was considered in the excellency of his person, and with respect to what he is in himself; in this verse he is considered in the execution of his office, or with respect to what he is unto his church. And here observe, 1. His affection in general towards us, *he hath loved us*; our blessed Redeemer hath given ample and full demonstration of his great and wonderful love unto his church and people, and none doth so properly and passionately love the church as Christ himself; before conversion he loves his people with a love of commiseration and compassion; after conversion, he loves them with a love of complacency and delight. Observe, 2. The discovery and manifestation which Christ has made of this his love particularly towards us, *He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood*; that is, he hath given himself a sacrifice for our sins, and by the merit of his blood freed us from the guilt of sin in our justification, and also by the efficacy of that blood cleansed us from the filth of sin in our sanctification: the blood of Christ hath both a pacifying and a purifying influence; it pacifies God's wrath, and purges the sinner's conscience; the blood of Christ merited the Spirit of God for our sanctification, and so reconciled us to God, as well as obtained pardon for us, in a way of meritorious satisfaction, and so reconciled God to us: *He washed us from our sins in his own blood*. Where note, A great emphasis in the double word of property. 1. Our sins; that is, every one of our own sins, without any imitation or exception whatsoever, as to the number or heinous nature of them: the sin against the Holy Ghost is indeed excepted; and this proceeds from

the incapacity of the sinner, not from the inefficacy or insufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for sin. 2. There is also an emphasis in the word of property with respect to Christ, when it is called *his own blood*: the Levitical priests sprinkled the people with blood, but it was not their *own* blood, but the blood of bulls and goats; but Christ spared not his *own* blood, and he did not barely sprinkle us with it, but washed us with it: it was not the blood of his finger, but the blood of his heart: his very life went with it; *He washed us from our sins in his own blood*. Observe, 3. The consequent effect and happy result of all this love of Christ towards us, and undertaken for us, *He hath made us kings and priests unto God*. 1. Kings, not in a temporal but a spiritual sense; they reign as kings over their unruly lusts and corruptions, over Satan, over the world, over death the king of terrors; they begin their reign upon earth, without which it were impossible to perfect and complete it in heaven. 2. Priests, consecrating themselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, and offering up, not expiatory, but gratulatory sacrifices unto him, namely, prayer and praise, supplication and thanksgiving. 1 Pet. ii. 6. *Ye are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*. Observe, 4. After this description of Christ, follows an ascription of all that glory and honour, dominion and power, which is his due, and our duty to ascribe unto him: *To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen*. Where note, That the same honour and glory, dominion and power, being here attributed and given to Christ, which Christ teaches us to ascribe and render unto God, Matt. vi. it is a sure testimony that Christ is God, and as such to be acknowledged and adored by us: *To whom be glory, &c.*

7 Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

These words are a majestic description of our Saviour's coming to judgment; they are ushered in with a note of attention and admiration, *Behold!* which denotes also the truth and certainty of his appearance, and upbraids us likewise for our natural backwardness to believe, mind, and meditate upon, the coming of Christ; we are too much guided and governed by sense: what we see nothing of, we believe little of; therefore St. John here begins with a note of incitement in the word, *Behold!* It fo-

lows, *he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him.* This was fulfilled, 1. When Christ came by the Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem, by taking vengeance on his murderers, when his crucifiers might discern that those heavy and direful judgments were inflicted on them for their crucifying Christ, and persecuting Christians. But, 2. It will be more eminently and universally fulfilled at the general day of Judgment, when Christ will come riding upon the clouds, as in a triumphant chariot, and all human eyes shall then see him; his persecutors and despisers, particularly, beholding him, but not all alike: such as pierced him, but repented, whose hearts were afterwards pierced for their piercing of him, these at that day shall see Christ with astonishing joy, though they put him to bitter sorrow; the death of Christ has procured mercy for those whose cruelty did procure his death: but as for such as pierced him, but never repented, but such as pierced him in his person, or in his members, they shall also see him to their sorrow, and shall wail, or take on heavily, because of him; that is, because they must be judged by him. Lord! how will the sight of a pierced Saviour then pierce their souls with sorrow, with vexation of heart, and anguish of spirit! To behold Christ with an eye of sense then will be very grievous to them that do not behold him with an eye of faith now; see him they shall, they must; but alas, they had rather be covered with mountains and hills falling upon them, than thus behold him! Observe farther, How St John closes this description of Christ's second coming, with a pathetic option on his own and the church's behalf, in the last words of the verse—*Even so, Amen*; intimating, that the saints, or church of God, do expect and believe that assuredly it will be so, and do also earnestly desire and pray that it may be so. Learn hence, That Christ will undoubtedly come to put an end to the sufferings of his afflicted church, and to punish his and their persecutors; with whose coming the saints are well pleased, and do earnestly desire and long for it; behold, *he cometh,—Even so, Amen.* Come, Lord Jesus.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Observe here, 1. That what was applied to God the Father, at the fourth verse, namely, that *he was, is, and is to come*, is here by Christ applied to himself at the

eighth verse: *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, which was, and is to come.* Alpha is the first, Omega the last, letter of the Greek alphabet, and as such they enclose all the rest. Christ calling himself the first and the last, that is, the first cause and the last end, (as nothing began before him, so nothing can outlast him,) he does hereby discover his divinity to us, that he is co-essential and consubstantial with the Father, the same attribute being given to both: understand we then that this text plainly speaks the godhead of Christ, against the Socinians. Christ calling himself *the first and the last*, takes to himself absolute perfection and power, sovereignty and dignity, eternity and divinity; he is the first, because he was before all beginning, and because from him all things had their beginning; he is also the last, because he shall continue for ever, without end, because he is the end of all things, and because when we have attained him, we are at the highest and last of our attainments; we rest, and have no more to seek when we have found Christ, for he brings us to the Father, in whom we have eternal rest through himself, the Son: and the last title Christ assumes to himself, namely, *the Almighty*, bespeaks his divinity; he is God Almighty, able to accomplish all his promises to his people, and to execute his threatenings on his enemies; and if the adversaries of our Saviour's godhead in the glass of this text do not see his divinity, it is not because they cannot, but they will not see. *I am*, says Christ, *Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, which was, and is to come, the Almighty.*

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as if of a trumpet, 11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia: unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

The preface being ended in the foregoing verses, here begins the body or visionary part of this book; the first vision is

here before us, concerning the seven Asian churches. In which vision we have observable, 1. The person that received it, he is described by his name, *John, I John*; by his spiritual relation, *I John your brother*; by his then present condition, your *companion in tribulation*, undergoing like sufferings with you; your companion in the *kingdom of Christ*, that is, in expecting of, and hoping for, the same kingdom of heaven and glory which ye expect; and I am also your companion in patience, called the patience of Jesus Christ, because in his word he requires it, because by his Spirit he produces it, because in his own example he gave us a pattern of it: and perhaps principally because the present state of the kingdom of Christ in this world calls for it. Observe, 2. The place where St. John received this vision; in the isle of Patmos, not far from the Asian churches, into which the emperor Domitian banished him, having, as is said, cast him first into a caldron of burning oil, out of which he miraculously escaped. Ecclesiastical history says, St. John was very near an hundred years old, when he was by that bloody emperor banished into Patmos, for preaching the word of God, and for bearing testimony for this truth, that Jesus Christ was the Saviour of the world. Learn, That the greatest honour which an apostle, an aged apostle, a beloved apostle, can be admitted to the participation of, is to suffer banishment and death for bearing a faithful testimony of Jesus Christ. Observe, 3. The time when St. John had this glorious vision of Christ, communion with him, and communications from him: it was upon the *Lord's day*: *I was in the Spirit*, that is, in spiritual meditation, in spiritual ecstasy, in a transporting rapture by the Spirit, under his more immediate illumination and powerful influences; on the Lord's day, namely, the first day of the week, so called, because Christ at his resurrection took possession of it for his own, and because the end of its institution was to commemorate Christ's resurrection, and because applied to his special worship and service, and as such religiously observed by the apostles, *Acts* xx. 7. and by the universal church, ever since the apostle's days. In that St. John, in a solitary island, kept the Christian Sabbath, we learn, that the religious observation of the Lord's day is a duty incumbent upon all persons and in all places. Learn, 2. How Christ owned his own day, and encouraged St. John in his religious and strict observation of it, by the influence of his Holy Spirit upon him, and by communicating extraordinary revelations to him; *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and*

heard behind me a great voice. Observe, 4. The vision and revelation itself, which began with his hearing a loud voice like a trumpet; that is, the voice of Christ, full of majesty and power, spake unto him, saying, *What thou seest*, that is, what thou shalt see and hear, *write in a book*, and send it to the seven churches. Here note, 1. That the book of the Revelation was written by Christ's own direction, therefore warranted to be of divine authority. Note, 2. That what Christ commanded St. John carefully to write, it becomes us heedfully to read; for though what St. John wrote and sent concerned the seven Asian churches at that time, and had a particular respect to their present state; yet all scripture is written for our learning, and we are to beg spiritual wisdom from God to make a right use and holy improvement of what is written.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; 13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. 14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow: and his eyes were as a flame of fire; 15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

As if St. John had said, "I turned to see the person whose voice I heard speaking with me, and I beheld seven golden candlesticks, representing the seven Asian churches, and in the midst of those candlesticks I saw one in the shape of a man, which reminded me of Christ the Son of man, clothed in garments much like unto Aaron's the high-priest, who was an illustrious type of Christ, our great and merciful High-priest, who made an atonement for us on earth, and maketh now intercession for us in the highest heavens." Note here, 1. The comparison made between the churches of Christ and the golden candlesticks; they are candlesticks, in regard of the light which they held forth; the candlestick does not give light of itself, but holds it forth to others: it is the church's duty to keep within herself the pure word of

God, and to keep herself pure from being besmeared with errors in doctrine, or vice in conversation. Churches, the holiest and purest of all churches, are rather candlesticks than candles; Christ is the light, the word is the lamp, the church but the instrument to convey the light unto us. Again, the churches are golden candlesticks; gold is the most precious of metals, the church is the most excellent of all societies; for it beautifies all societies whatsoever that are members of the church of Christ. Note, 2. How Christ was seen by St. John walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, present in and with his churches; that is, St. John had in his vision a very lively representation of Christ in his human nature; not that St. John now saw Christ in his manhood really, for that was then in heaven, but he had a resemblance of it in the vision. Note, 3. The description given of Christ, as walking in the midst of his gospel church. He is, 1. described by his attire, habited like *Aaron the high-priest*, with a garment down to his feet, and girt with a golden girdle; to signify, that as Aaron was of the old so Christ is the high-priest of the new testament, presenting continually to his Father the memorials of his death, the merits of his sacrifice, and making intercession with the Father for our gracious acceptance with him. 2. He is next described by the parts and members of the body: *His head and hair as white as snow and wool*, signify his eternity and his purity, that he is the *Ancient of days*, even the Father of eternity, and perfectly innocent, pure and holy: *His eyes like flaming fire*, denoting his piercing knowledge; that as head of his church, he spies out all her ways, words, and thoughts: *His feet like burning brass*, and *his voice like many waters*; which expressions represent the dread and terror of Christ towards the enemies of his church; and that vengeance he would execute upon his murderers, in particular, at the destruction of Jerusalem, and upon all the impenitent rejecters of his gospel grace, at the general judgment: then will they understand what they now will not believe, that it is a *fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. 3. He is next described by what he had in his right hand, namely, *seven stars*, representing the seven angels, bishops and ministers of the seven churches. These are called *stars*, their office and duty being to enlighten the church, both by the light of life and doctrine; and as stars are seated above, so should their conversation be in heaven, and their affections not set upon the things below. Stars give direc-

tion, light, and influence, to others; they were not made for themselves. Ministers must not chiefly seek their own, but others' good. Stars are swift in their motion, and their motion is constantly in their own orb and sphere. Vain is the pretence of care and concern for other churches, whilst we neglect our own. Finally, ministers are stars, as in respect to their situation, and in respect of their constant and regular motion; so in respect of their continuance and duration. Stars are fixed in heaven, so are ministers in the church; Christ holds them in his hand, otherwise the world would soon have them under their feet. 4. He is described by a sharp *two-edged sword* coming out of his mouth, denoting the piercing power of the word of God to conquer sin, convert sinners, and to condemn and slay the unconverted. Lastly, it is added, that *his countenance was as the sun that shineth in his strength*; that is, very glorious in itself, and very comforting and refreshing to those that are his members, his sincere believers and followers. This part of the description of Christ sweetly follows the former: when his feet were as burning brass, to tread down and consume his enemies; his countenance was as the sun, to cheer and cherish, to comfort and refresh his friends.

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: 18 I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Observe here, 1. The effect which this glorious representation of Christ in this vision had upon St. John; he was astonished and amazed at it, and fell down at Christ's feet as one almost dead. Note from hence, That the holiest man on earth is not able to bear the presence of Christ here, nor able to stand before his gracious manifestation of himself, when he comes to reveal himself in mercy towards him. See *Hab. iii. 15, 16*. Lord, how unable then will the wicked be at the great day to stand before the manifestation of thy fury! If at this visionary representation of Christ, St. John trembled, and fell at his feet as dead, how unable will the impertinent world be to look him in the face at the great day, when he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, rendering vengeance to them that know not God! Observe, 2. The seasonable care of Christ for St. John's relief in this great

exigency: *He laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not.* Hereby Christ discovered both his readiness to help, and his ability to help; the right hand is the supporting hand, the strengthening hand; Christ did not send an angel to comfort St. John, but laid his own hand upon him, to assure him both of safety and succour. Observe, 3. As what Christ did, so what he likewise said, for St. John's comfort and support under the burden of his fears: *Fear not*, says Christ, for *I am the first and the last*; that is, I am an eternal Being, without either beginning or end. Again, *I am he that liveth, and was dead.* As if Christ had said, "Fear not death or dying, for I have overcome death by dying, and conquered the king of terrors in his own territories; but, behold, *I am now alive for evermore*, for the benefit of my church, and to protect and defend my faithful servants." Nay, farther, to show that his life was not a bare subsistence, but clothed with power, Christ adds, "*I have also the keys of hell and of death*"; that is, a sovereign power over the whole invisible world, to let into heaven, and to lock into hell as I please." The keys are an emblem of authority and power; the steward who has the keys of the house, commands the house. There are four keys which Christ keeps in his own hands; the key of the womb, the key of the clouds, the key of the earth as of a granary of corn, and the key of the grave. When Christ says here, *I have the keys of hell and of death*, the meaning is, that he has a sovereign dominion over both worlds; over this in which we live, and over that into which we die, whether the one or the other part of it, heaven and hell both: for the words must not be understood with a debasing limitation, only respecting hell, as if Christ had only the keys of the bottomless pit: but the original word *Hades*, signifies the invisible world, consisting of both heaven and hell; and he has a power over both, and also over death too, which is the common passage into both places. Learn hence, 1. If Christ has the power of death, and keeps the key of the grave, in his own hand, that men do not die at random, by accident and chance, but by determination and judgment; Christ by an authoritative act turns the key, and gives man his *exit* out of the world. Learn, 2. That Christ, who has the key of death, has also the key of *Hades*, the upper and lower *Hades*; heaven and hell; and such as go out of the world, go not out of being, but go into one of those states and places. Learn, 3. How admirable, and yet how amiable, Christ should be in all our eyes, who hath these keys in his

own hand, with such merciful intentions towards us; and how willingly should we die, when the keys of death are in so great, so kind an hand as his! O how happy is it when this power of our great Redeemer over death and the grave, and a placid resignation to his pleasure, do concur and meet together, not from stupidity, but trust in him that keeps the keys! Lord, when the key is turning, and thou art letting in souls into the invisible world, let thy servant depart in peace, and everlastingly see thy salvation!

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; 20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven churches.

This chapter concludes with a solemn charge given by our Saviour to St. John, to write and record the vision of the seven stars, and seven golden candlesticks, which he had newly seen; letting him into the mystery of both, by telling him, that the *seven stars are seven angels*; that is, signify seven angels; and the seven candlesticks *are*, that is, signify seven churches, and represent them. In like manner, when Christ says in the sacrament, *This is my body*, the meaning is, this bread signifies and represents my body. Here note, That the bishops and governors, the pastors and teachers, of the church are called *angels*, because they are sent by God on his message, because they had their commission from him; and to signify that unspotted purity which should be found with them, both in life and doctrine; and they are represented by *stars*, to denote their dignity and duty, their usefulness and beneficialness, the swiftness and constancy of their motion, but especially in regard to their nature. A star is of the same nature with the heavens, celestial; not earthly, not elementary: ministers should be heavenly, holy, blameless, inoffensive; they should teach by tongue and hand, and instruct by lip and life. God grant that in our hearts we may experimentally find the works of holiness, and in our lives express the power of holiness. Amen.

CHAP. II.

This book of Revelation being full of prophetic visions, St. John in the former chapter had a vision of our blessed Saviour, as appearing in

priestly garments, chap. i. 12. Wearing a garment down to his feet, in allusion to the priestly ephod, and the curious girdle under the law. From whence we may comfortably collect, that Christ, now in glory, remains still his church's priest. And pursuant to that his priestly office, he discovered them in heaven his great care for his church's good here on earth, by commanding St. John to write epistles to the seven Asian churches, commending, reproving, directing, warning, threatening, and comforting them, suitably to their respective conditions, and as their present case required. Quest. But seeing there were so many famous churches then in the world, as Rome, Corinth, Galatia, and others, why must St. John pass by them, and only write to those of Asia? Ans. Possibly because Patmos, where St. John was now in banishment, was nearer to these churches; and possibly because these churches were under his more immediate care and charge. For although the apostolical authority was universal over all the churches, yet the apostles did every one, by mutual consent, assume such a part of the world as their more especial charge; and accordingly Asia the Less, with her churches, did fall under St. John's care, who therefore at the command of Christ writes, and sends the following epistles to them, contained in this and the next chapter: in which he thus bespeaks them:

UNTO the angel of the church of Ephesus write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

1. Note here, 1. That the church of Ephesus, with the other six churches of Asia, were, at the time of St. John's writing, very flourishing churches, favoured as much with the special presence and influence of Christ as ever any churches were. Note, 2. That these churches are written to as a sort of types of all the Gentile churches unto the end of the world, and patterns also which the Gentile churches were to take warning by, Christ hereby declaring what all other churches, offending and declining in the same manner, might expect. Note, 3. That the first church St. John is commanded to write unto, is the church of Ephesus, and what is written is directed to the angel, the bishop, the president and chief minister in that church, to be communicated to all in the church, both ministers and people, as that which nearly concerned them all. Note, 4. That Christ in the beginning of every epistle doth notify himself by some one of those characters which he gave of himself in the former chapter, either as *the faithful and true witness, or as the first and the last, or as having the seven stars in his hand*. Thus here, *These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand*. Mark, he holdeth the stars in his hand, to show his tenderness; in his right hand, to show his power, supporting and directing them,

for the good of his people. It is added, that Christ *walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*. Which expression denotes Christ's gracious presence with them, his strict observation of them, his tender care over them, his protecting and defending of them in doing their duty to him, his encouraging or reproving, his rewarding or punishing, as there should be cause: *These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*. Learn hence, 1. That the ministers of Christ are stars, yet but stars, they shine but with a borrowed light, with a light derived from the sun: they shine but for a time, the day hastens when these stars shall disappear for ever. Learn, 2. These stars are in the right hand of Christ, in his power, and at his disposal; he appoints them their orbs where they shall shine, and appoints them also their time for shining. Learn, 3. That the church is a candlestick, a golden candlestick. As a candlestick has no more light than what is put into it, and must be continually maintained by a new supply of oil, such is the state of the church; and as a candlestick is a moveable thing, remove the candlestick, and the light is removed with it: so when God removes the light of the gospel from a people, he unchurches them. Farther, the church is called a golden candlestick, because as gold is the purest of metals, and excels other metals in preciousness, so God expects his church should differ as much from the world, as gold doth from common clay. Learn, 4. That there is a special gracious presence of Christ with his church in all her administrations. *He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks*; it denotes his presence with them, and this presence of his is an holy presence, and a joyous presence.

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not; and hast found them liars: 3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. 4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Observe here, 1. A general declaration which stands in the front of the several epistles, *I know thy works*, both thy inward and outward works, to observe and mark

them, to punish or reward them, as the case requires. This proves the divinity of Christ, that he is truly and essentially God; he knows the hearts of men, which none but a God can know. Ver. 23. *All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and the hearts.* Observe, 2. The commendation which is here given of this church for her labour in propagating the gospel, for her patience in bearing affliction and persecution for it, for the strictness of her discipline, that she did not bear with, nor tolerate and endure, such persons as were either erroneous in judgment or scandalous in practice; for her faithfulness in trying the authority of those who pretended to an immediate call from God to be apostles, but were found liars and false prophets; such were those two succeeding heretics, Ebion and Cerinthus, and their followers. Mark here, How our Lord Jesus Christ doth observe and approve, doth commend and praise, whatever is good in his church, and whatever is commendable and praiseworthy in the members of it; yet, at the same time, when he commends them for what is good, he reproves them for what is evil and amiss; and accordingly, Observe, 3. The reprehension given, ver. 4. *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* As if Christ had said, "I observe amongst you a great abatement of your former zeal and fervour; you have not that hearty love to me, and to one another, which you had at first, but verily you grow cooler when you should grow better." Learn hence, 1. That where there is truth of grace, there may yet be a sad decay and declining in grace. 2. That Christ takes notice of, and is displeased with, such decays and declining in grace, and severely checks and reproves his people for them: *I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love.*

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

We had Christ's commendation and reprehension of the church of Ephesus before, we have his admonition and exhortation now. The words before us are partly monitory, and partly minatory; monitory in the former part of the verse, *Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent.* Note here, That Christ did not surprisingly come upon this church at unawares; they were admonished before

chastised, warned before laid waste; Christ doth premonish before he punishes. In the minatory part we have a great guilt and sin supposed, a great judgment for that guilt denounced, the unchurching of them that had committed it; and the means prescribed for the averting of that judgment, to wit, repentance. Learn hence, 1. That a people professing religion and godliness may fall. 2. That fallen professors should and ought to remember from whence they are fallen. 3. That fallen professors should be repenting professors, and do their first works. 4. That without repentance and reformation, God will certainly remove a people's candlestick, take away the gospel from them, as the severest judgment which he can inflict upon them. *Remember, repent, and do the first works, else I will remove thy candlestick out of its place:* that is, such a tempest of persecution shall arise, as will shake your tottering candlestick out of its place. The universal church only has a promise of stability; any particular church may be unchurched finally.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

As if Christ had said, "Though thou art not what thou shouldest be, yet this thou hast commendable in thee, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, (who held community of wives, and ate things offered to idols,) which impure sect I also hate for their licentious doctrine and lewd practices, which tend to the ruin and bane of human societies. "Note here, 1. That it is not unlawful to call heretics by the name of their leaders; the Nicolaitans are here so called from one Nicolas, supposed to be the deacon mentioned, *Acts. vi.* who having a beautiful wife exposed her as common, to avoid the imputation of jealousy. Note, 2. That Christ hated all licentious doctrines and loose practices, and so should we.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;

That is, "Let all that hear and read these words unto the churches, which the Holy Spirit has uttered, consider them, and set their hearts to regard them as matters of great importance, and which nearly concern them." Observe, That this form of speech, *He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear,* Christ often used at the end of his parables, when he would stir up the people to more than ordinary attention; and he uses it here in this and the next chap-

ter, at the end of every one of these epistles to the several churches.

—To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

As if Christ had said, "Let all such as fall away from their holy profession for fear of persecution consider what they lose, even eternal life, which I only will give to such as persevere; for to him that overcometh trials and temptations, will I give a share of my merits, and thereby a title to eternal happiness, signified by the tree of life in paradise." Note here, 1. It is not said, to him that striveth or resisteth will I give the crown of life, but to him that overcometh. Lazy wishes are so far from saving men, that endeavours, yea, striving against temptation, without conquering and overcoming, will not save. It is not enough that we resist, but we must conquer; not sufficient that we strive, but we must overcome: *To him that overcometh.* Note, 2. From the promise that Christ makes of eternal life, *I will give*, a clear argument for Christ's being God, essentially God; how is it else that he assumes to himself a power of dispensing eternal life? *I will give to eat of the tree of life.*

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; 9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and I *know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan. 10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. 11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Here we have the second epistle, which St. John wrote by the command of Christ to the Church of Smyrna, a famous city in one of the provinces of Asia, where Polycarp was bishop, and suffered martyrdom. Now in this epistle we have these particulars considerable. 1. The description which Christ is pleased here to give of himself, namely, *The first and the last, which was dead and is alive*; and the suitableness of this

description, for the consolation of this church, which was now under great tribulation. It is as if Christ had said, "I am an eternal Being, the first cause, and last end; I was myself put to death, but I am alive again; therefore, fear neither sufferings nor death, for I will assist and strengthen you, and if you lose your lives for my sake, I will raise your bodies again to everlasting life." Observe, 2. the commendation given by Christ of this church at Smyrna, it is large and full; nay, Christ blameth nothing in this church: she kept her purity best, because always in affliction: not but there were failings undoubtedly in this church, but Almighty God mercifully overlooked them. As in the case of Job, no mention is made of his impatience, though he showed much, but we are called upon to behold him as a pattern of patience. Observe next, The particulars of this church's commendation, *I know thy works, and thy tribulation, and poverty*; that is, thy labour and sufferings, and worldly poverty, which thy profession of the gospel hath brought upon thee: but though thou art outwardly poor, yet art thou inwardly rich; rich in grace, rich in faith and patience, rich in meekness and humility, rich in courage and Christian fortitude. And farther, I know also the *blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not*; that is, I know the malicious reproaches and evil speeches of your enemies; cast upon you, partly by naïve Jews, who glory in circumcision and the law; and partly by false Christians, professing faith in Christ, but not daring to own him, for fear of persecution. These belong to Satan's synagogue, not to Christ's church. None are so bad as they who only profess and seem to be good. Observe farther, The encouragement which Christ gives this church to persevere in the faith, though they should suffer much sharper things than ever they yet suffered: fear none of the things you may be called forth to suffer: what though the devil by his instruments cast some of you into prison, and you suffer for a short time, be faithful to your profession until the day of your death, and I shall reward you with a crown of life. Note here, 1. That Satan by his instruments has been the cause of all those bitter and bloody persecutions which Christianity in all ages hath undergone. Note, 2. That though Satan's malice be infinite, yet his power is limited and bounded; he cannot do all the mischief he would, and he shall not do all he can: Satan shall cast you into prison, but not into hell; and not all of you into prison neither, but some only. Note, 3. How mercifully Almighty

God overrules the devil's rage and malice, making it subservient to his own glory, and his church's good, causing that which Satan intended for destruction, to serve only for probation and trial. The devil's design by all those floods of wrath, which he pours out against the church, is that she may be destroyed; but God's intent is only that she may be tried; even as the wise refiner, when he casts his gold into the furnace, designs the purifying of the metal, and only the consuming of the dross. Note, 4. That the sufferings of good men for the cause of Christianity, though they may be sharp, yet shall they be but short: *Ye shall have tribulation ten days*, that is, for a short space of time. Note, 5. That a persevering faithfulness in the service of Christ in this life, is indispensably necessary to our obtaining the crown of life and immortality in the world to come: *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*. Observe lastly, The conclusion of this epistle to the church of Smyrna: this is partly hortatory: *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear, what the spirit saith unto the churches*. The warnings of the Holy Spirit to the churches are recorded as of great concernment for all to mind: and partly promissory, *He that overcometh*, that is, conquereth the love of this world, and the love of life, when God calls him forth to suffer, he *shall not be hurt of the second death*, that is, he shall escape eternal misery, that living death, and that dying life, which will be the assured lot and portion of the wicked and ungodly world.

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; *These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges*; 13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even where Satan's seat is*: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. 14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. 15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. 16 Repent: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against

them with the sword of my mouth. 17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

In these verses is contained the third epistle, which St. John by direction had wrote and sent to the church of Pergamos, in which (as in the former) we have, 1. A description of Christ, as having a sharp two-edged sword in his mouth; denoting the word of God, and that piercing power which accompanies it to conquer the lusts and corruptions of men. As also, 2. A commendation of what was good and excelling in that church, *I know thy works*; that is, with a knowledge of intelligence and observation, as also with a knowledge of approbation and acceptance. I know thee to be good in bad places, and in the worst of times, though thou dwellest where Satan's seat is, that is, where Satan bears sway by idolatry and persecution: yet dost thou *hold fast my name*, that is, the doctrine of the gospel preached in my name, and by which I am made known to the world as a man is by his name; and *hast not denied my faith*, but openly professed it in a time of persecution, even then when blood and slaughter attended the professors and profession of it, namely, when Antipas was slain, (who probably was a bishop, or some minister in Pergamos, of extraordinary piety; for upon such the storm of persecution generally falls;) who died a faithful witness to the truth of my gospel; even then and there, I say, hadst thou the courage to profess my name, and bear witness to the truth. Mark here, What an honourable mention Christ makes of the services and sufferings of his people; nothing we either do or suffer for Christ, but it is recorded, and shall be remembered to our commendation and honour in this life, and to our consolation and happiness in the next. Yet note farther, The holy impartiality of our blessed Lord; at the same time when he commends this church for what was commendable and praiseworthy, he reproves her for what was faulty and blameworthy, ver. 14. *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, and the Nicolaitans*; that is, the doctrine of the impure Gnostics, who teach men now to eat things offered to idols, and to commit fornication, even as Balaam of old directed

Balak to ensnare the Israelites, by committing fornication with the Moabitish women, and to eat of what they sacrificed unto idols then. Here observe, That it was not the being of those heretics and heresies among them that Christ blames them for, but the tolerating of these in their communion, who made light both of adultery and idolatry. They ought to have executed church discipline upon them, and denounced the church censures against them, as had been done by the church of Ephesus before them, that Christ might have said of them, as he did of those, v. 6. *Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.* Observe next, The counsel which Christ gives this church, *Repent*; that is, be humbled for this thy connivance at and tolerating of this wicked sect and damnable doctrine, and amend, or verily I will come quickly upon thee and them in a way of judgment; *and fight against them with a two-edged sword*, that is, with my holy word, convince, wound, and condemn them, &c. The want of zeal and severity against sin and incorrigible sinners, is very displeasing to Christ, and provokes him to anger greatly. Observe lastly, The conclusion and close of this epistolary letter, which is partly exhortatory, *He that hath ears, let him hear*, and with his mind ponder and consider what the Spirit saith, by way of counsel and caution, unto the churches; and partly consolatory, *To him that overcometh will I give, &c.* Mark, he doth not say, to every one that fighteth; no, not to every one that conquereth in one, two, or more particular acts of resistance; but to him that perseveringly conquers, and finally overcomes both tempter and temptations, both persecutors and persecutions, both false teachers and false doctrines, to them will I give the *hidden manna*, laid up, not in the earthly tabernacle, but the heavenly sanctuary; by which understand Christ himself, and the joys and consolations of the Holy Spirit, which are hidden from the world, and the peculiar portion of such as sincerely believe in him, and cheerfully suffer for him. It is added, *I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name*; that is, absolution and pardon of sin, together with the privilege of adoption; it being a custom anciently, to give a white stone in token of absolution, and a black stone as a sign of condemnation, on which stones were written the names of the innocent and guilty; accordingly this new name signifies God's pardoned and adopted ones; the sweetness and comfort of which privilege no man knows, but he that is possessed of it: the happiness of God's sons both here and hereafter can-

not be expressed; only they that are so, know what it is to be so: and whereas Christ says, *I will give the hidden manna, I will give the white stone and the new name*, to them that overcome; surely it affords a good argument to convince and prove his divinity; who but a God can pardon sin, and sanctify and save sinners?

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira, write: These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass: 19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. 20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. 21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. 22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

The next epistle is directed by Christ, and written by St John, to the church of Thyatira; in which epistle observe, 1. The name given to Christ, he is styled the Son of God; that is, by eternal generation, being the only-begotten of the Father, as well as begotten of the Father only; and partaker of the Father's essence, as well as of his likeness: he is here called the Son of God, as being a distinct person from the Father; yet is he the *first* and the *last*, which denotes his eternity; and who *is*, and who *was*, and is to *come*, the Almighty, which are essential attributes of the Godhead. Observe, 2. The description here given of Christ, *His eyes like flaming fire, and his feet like burning brass*: denoting thereby his piercing and discerning sight to see and observe his enemies, his fiery indignation, and fierce wrath, ready to take hold of them, and his irresistible power and strength to vanquish and tread them under his feet. Observe, 3. The great and

special commendation which Christ gives to this church: greatly she is commended for her charity to Christians in distress; for her service in ministering to them, and in comforting of them; for her faith and constant adherence to the profession of Christianity; and for her patience under persecutions for the gospel's sake; but her special and peculiar commendation was this, that *her last works were more than her first*; that is, her last works were better, did exceed and excel the first. Ephesus was best at first, and worst at last; but Thyatira's last works were best. It is a blessed thing when Christians grow in goodness, increase in faith and holiness, when their last days are their best days; their last works, and their last fruit, their best, their fairest fruit. Observe, 4. The reprehension follows the commendation; as good as Thyatira was, she needed to be better. She was remiss and negligent in her duty of reproving, censuring, excommunicating vile seducers, the Gnostics, and Nicolaitans, the disciples of Simon Magus, and his lewd Helena, as some think; compared to Jezebel, because she enticed Ahab to worship Baal, as this woman, (whosoever she was,) calling herself a prophetess, and teaching the lawfulness of fornication, and eating things offered to idols. Some observe, That there was scarce any heresy broached, but it had some woman or other for the propagator and promoter of it, who took upon them the name of prophetesses. Simon Magus had his Helena; Montanus had his Priscilla and Maximilla; Carpocrates his Marcellina. Concerning this person it is affirmed, that *God gave her space to repent, but she repented not*. Learn thence, That great is the sin, folly, and danger, of deferring and putting off the duty of repentance, when God gives time and space sufficient to perform it. 1. Great is the sin, because it is a mocking of God's patience, and undervaluing of his service, a contempt of his authority, a presuming on his goodness, a defiance of his displeasure. 2. Great is the folly, as well as the sin of it, because we put it off to the most improper and unfitting season, and because we hereby make the work more hard and difficult, in what season soever we set about it; and the longer we delay our repentance, the more work shall we make for repentance. 3. As great is the danger as either the sin or folly, because it puts a person upon a mighty hazard; he runs a desperate venture, not knowing whether he shall live an hour longer; and because we forfeit by our delays that special grace, without the assistance whereof we can never repent. Ob-

serve, 5. How severely God threatens Jezebel here, and in her all sinners, to whom he gives space for repentance, but it is not improved for that end: I will cast her into a bed of tribulation and torment, instead of her bed of lust and uncleanness, unless she repent. Behold here how great and immeasurable the patience of God is towards the greatest, the vilest, and the worst of sinners; they have space for repentance, they have invitations to repent, they have judgments threatened to prevent their final impenitence: but if they prove incorrigible and unreclaimable, nothing is to be expected but approaching ruin: *I will kill her children with death*; that is, such as are seduced by her suffer with her, if judgments threatened be not by repentance prevented. Observe, lastly, The end and design of Christ in bringing upon vile sinners these exemplary punishments, namely, to declare his omniscieny, power, and justice: *All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts*: that is, all the churches in and about Thyatira, says Christ, shall know that I not only observe outward acts, but take notice of the secret counsels, motions, and designs, of men's hearts, and will judge every man according to his works: a full and clear text to prove the divinity of Christ: he that searcheth men's hearts, and renders to all men according to their works, is God; but Christ doth both, and therefore is essentially and truly God.

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, (as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak:) I will put unto you none other burden. 25 But that which ye have *already*, hold fast till I come. 26 And he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning-star. 29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Here Christ returns to his counsel and charge given to the church at Thyatira, *Unto you I say*: that is, to you the angel, the governors and pastors, and to all the members of the church; I say unto you all, who have not owned nor entertained these doctrines of the Gnostics, who proud-

ly call their filthy opinions profound mysteries and depths of knowledge, though they are indeed the depths of Satan, his policies and devices: as if Christ had said, "These vile seducers call their opinions depths, and so they are, but depths of Satan; that is, such depths as Satan has brought out of hell; they are the whisperings and hissings of the old serpent, not the inspirations of the holy God; to you, I say, that I will not oppose or put upon you any new doctrine, but charge you to hold fast the old, that apostolic doctrine which you have received; persevere therein till I come to relieve you, and to release you from your persecutions, which will soon be at an end: *Hold fast till I come.*" Observe farther, How our Saviour concludes this epistle to the church of Thyatira, as he did the former, with a consolatory promise to such as overcome temptations, persecutions, all and all manner of opposition in their Christian conversation, and faithfully persevere in well-doing to the end; *to him*, says Christ, *will I give power over the nations*; that is, power with me, and in subordination to me, to judge the world, wicked angels, and wicked men, at the great day; then shall you rule them with a rod of iron, and dash them to shivers like a potter's vessel, even as I have received of my Father. As if Christ had said, "I have received power, as Mediator, from my Father, effectually to subdue and conquer all mine and your enemies, and I will make you partakers of it in some measure; you shall exercise an irresistible power over them by consenting to, by approving and applauding of, that righteous judgment which I shall denounce against them, and execute and inflict upon them." Learn, That believers shall sit as assessors with Christ in judgment, and approve the equity of his proceedings, against the finally impenitent then, though never so near and dear unto them now. Observe lastly, The full and final reward which Christ promises to him that finally persevereth, and manfully overcometh, *I will give him the morning star*; that is, myself and Spirit to comfort him, and the light of glory to shine upon him to all eternity. Note, Christ is called a star, because he enlightens all with the light of natural knowledge, and his church with divine illumination; and the *morning-star*, peradventure with respect to his incarnation, because as that rises not at the beginning of the night, or at the middle of it, but towards morning; so Christ came not in the beginning or middle of the dark time under the law, but in the last age of the world, in which he has shined forth to the joy and comfort of all nations.

CHAP. III.

AND unto the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things saith he that hath the Seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. 3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard; and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

This chapter began the fifth epistle which Christ wrote and directed to the church at Sardis. In which observe, 1. The glorious description given of our Lord Jesus Christ, namely, that he has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; that is, according to some, he hath the Holy Spirit of God proceeding from him as from the Father: and because he had power to send the Holy Ghost, together with the Father, he is therefore said to have the seven spirits of God; so the Holy Ghost is called, because of the perfection and variety of his gifts and graces, influences and operations. Others by the seven Spirits understand created angels; and the seven Spirits being joined with seven Stars, intimate according to these, that Christ is the Lord of angels and ministers, he upholds his ministers, and has angels always at hand to defend his members. Observe, 2. This church's partial opinion of herself; in her own and others' esteem, she was alive; thou hast a reputation for an excellent church, thy profession causes many to think and speak well of thee: *Thou hast a name that thou livest.* Observe, 3. Christ's impartial judgment concerning her, as one that knew her better than either others did, or herself could know her: thou sayest thou art thus and thus, alive and lively; but, alas! thou art no better than dead, thou art dead or dying, thyself and others are deceived concerning thee. Learn hence, 1. That it is possible for a professing people to be alive in their own and others' esteem, and yet to be dead or dying in God's account; at the same time that they make a splendid and glorious profession of religion, they may be under the reign and power of hypocrisy. Learn hence, 2. That no religious pretences, no fair shows, can possibly hide a person's or

a people's hypocrisy from God's eye: thou sayest that thou art thus, but I know thee better than others do, or thou canst know thyself; thou hast a name to live, but thou art dead. Observe, 4. The counsel given by Christ to this languid and languishing church. 1. To be watchful; to shake off her drowsiness and formality; no reformation can be expected, if due consideration, watchfulness, and care, be not exercised. 2. To strengthen the things that are ready to die; that is, blow up every spark of grace which lodges under the ashes of much corruption, and keep it from going quite out. Spirituals are to be succoured and strengthened, if once they grow languishing and dying, lest they grow quite dead. 3. To remember what they had received and heard from Christ's apostles and ministers: *to hold fast the truths received, and to repent of what is evil, and to reform what has been done amiss; intimating, that it is the duty of Christians to remember those truths which they have heard and received, and also to hold fast what they have heard and received: and that renewed repentance is the duty of Christians, as well as initial repentance.* Observe, 5. The complaint which Christ brings in against the church of Sardis, *I have not found thy works perfect before God*; not full, says the original, that is, not filled up with that sincerity and zeal which God requires: a man may be full of good works, and yet his works not be full; a man may be full of prayer, pray much, pray often, and yet his prayer not full, but vain and empty; sincerity is the fulness or filling up of all duties: it is not common frailty, but the want of sincerity and soundness, zeal and seriousness, which Christ complains of. Observe, 6. The danger threatened to security and slothfulness, *If thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief*; that is, I will surprise thee with my judgments in the midst of thy security, as a thief does persons when they are asleep, and least expect him; the expression plainly intimates, both the suddenness of the judgment, and the severity of the judgment threatened.

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.

Note here, That though the greater part in Sardis were dead or dying, that is, declining or decaying, yet there were some that kept their innocency, and preserved themselves from error and false worship, from erroneous principles and debauched

practices. Note farther, That these few which keep themselves pure above the rest, are not commanded to separate from the rest. Doctrines crying up purity to the prejudice of unity reject, for the gospel calls for unity as well as for purity. Note also, The reward promised to such as kept themselves in Sardis pure both from error and vice: *They shall walk with Christ in white*, like persons of dignity and honour, like kings and conquerors, who of old wore white garments; they shall have the reward of their innocency and uprightness, for they are worthy of it, according to the law of grace, which promiseth it to them: they have walked worthily, with a worthiness of meetness, not with a worthiness of merit; they are therefore meet receivers, though not meritorious purchasers, of this reward.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Observe, Christ doth not say, he that conflicteth, but he that vanquisheth; not he that conquereth once or twice in the spiritual combat, but he that overcomes at last the temptations and persecutions from without, the lusts and corruptions from within: *he shall be clothed with white raiment*, that is, with robes of glory, as the reward of his innocency and virtue, and as a mark of dignity and honour: and farther, *I will not blot his name out of the book of life*; that is, they shall be enrolled in it, and certainly saved, and I will present them to my Father, yea, I will publicly own them and confess them before God, angels, and men. Lord! what an honour is this, to know thy people by name, and to call them by name before thy throne, and there publicly to acknowledge them, and proclaim the good done by them! O let it be our care to get first the white garment of grace on earth, and then we shall not miss of the white robes of glory in heaven.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

These words are the same exhortatory conclusion which we find added by Christ to all the foregoing epistles; and plainly signify thus much, that all persons should look upon themselves as concerned in these several messages which the Spirit of Christ sends unto the churches; hence it is so oft repeated both in the former chapter and in

this chapter, because it is of such universal use, and so nearly concerns us all.

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; 'These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth: and shutteth, and no man openeth: 8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. 9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Here we have the sixth epistle indited by Christ, written and sent by St. John to the church of Philadelphia, which name signifies *brotherly love*, and we may reasonably suppose that grace of love, unity, and concord, was eminently found with and amongst the members of this church, and had a mighty influence upon them in the practice of universal godliness, in as much as we find not this church blamed by Christ for any thing; not that she was wholly faultless, and altogether unblamable, but being free from those gross miscarriages which were in other Christians, and abounding with love to Christ, and one towards another. Christ graciously passes by and overlooks her failings and infirmities, and only proclaims her virtues and good works. Sincerity and love, though they do not blind Christ's eye, that he cannot see sin in his people, yet it causes him to look upon their failings with a pitiful and compassionate eye. This Philadelphia is said to be a mean city, not far from Sardis; yet here Christ had a very eminent church, not faulted for any thing: it is not the grandeur, but graciousness, of a people, that renders a place renowned. In this epistle to the Philadelphians, we have these particulars observable, 1. A lofty description of Christ, by whose authority it was written: *He is holy and true*, holy in himself essentially, holy in respect to us communicatively, the author, approver, and dispenser of all holiness; and *true*, that is, a lover and approver of truth. This title assures the church of the truth of all his predictions, promises, and threatenings; these two titles, *holy* and *true*, are generally ascribed to God in the Old Testament; these Christ, in the New Testament, often

attributes to himself, which he had never done had he not been truly and really God. The other part of the description of Christ follows, *That hath the key of David*, that is, of the church, of which David was a type: by the *key* power is denoted; Christ, as Mediator, has an absolute power over the church, being lord and head of it, and has committed a ministerial power of the keys to the governors and pastors of it; and having this key of the church in his own hand, by virtue of it *he opens, and none can shut; and shutteth and none can open*: that is, he can open, when he will, the door of success to his faithful ministers, by opening the hearts of his people through the power of converting grace, and no man can shut that door which Christ will thus open; and again, when he shuts the finally impenitent out of the church and out of heaven, no man can open and bring them in against his will: *He openeth, and none can shut: he shutteth, and none can open*. Observe, 2. The special favour which Christ indulged to this church, namely, the favour of success in her gospel administrations: *Behold, I have set before thee an open door*. Under the metaphor of an open door, the success and progress of the gospel, in the preaching and dispensation of it, is shadowed forth; it is a special favour from God when he opens a door of advantage to us, to do good, the least good, either by convincing and converting sinners, or by edifying, strengthening, and comforting saints, and when God is pleased to open such door, none shall shut it. Observe, 3. The commendation given by Christ of this church, *Thou hast a little strength*, a little spiritual inward strength, and but few external and outward helps and advantages; yet *hast thou kept my word*, my doctrine of faith, and my precepts for holy walking, these hast thou kept pure; and *hast not denied my name*, but adhered constantly to the profession of me and my gospel, notwithstanding all the temptations thou hast met with, by sufferings and reproaches. Note here, How Christ took notice of that little measure of strength which this church had, and accepted it: weak grace, if sincere, shall always find acceptance with Christ; thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word. Observe, 4. The gracious promise made by Christ unto this church, that her enemies should submit themselves unto her, and worship before her feet: *Behold, says Christ, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which falsely call themselves Jews; I will make them, namely, by the power of my grace, to come and worship before thy feet; they shall reverence thee, and pay a civil respect to thee, and shall*

know that I have loved thee. Learn hence, That the submission which the enemies of the church shall be forced to make unto her, by the power of Christ, is great and wonderful.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. 11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. 12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is New Jerusalem*, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and *I will write upon him my new name*. 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Still our blessed Saviour proceeds with promises and encouragements to this church, *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience*. Here note, That the doctrine of the gospel is called the word of Christ's patience, partly because it teaches patience in persecuting times, and partly because it is a doctrine which cannot firmly be adhered to without patience, *Thou hast kept the word of my patience*. To keep this word of Christ's patience, implies not only the keeping his doctrine pure and uncorrupted from error, but also the observing and practising all the duties of a good life. And note, The reward promised to this church for the performing of this duty, *Because thou hast kept—I will keep thee*: Christ will not be behind-hand in rewarding our obedience, no, not in this life: I will (here) *keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world*. Here note, 1. That a time of affliction, much more of persecution, is a time of temptation, because an afflicted and persecuted state hath many circumstances attending it, by which all are tried and some ensnared. Note, 2. That a time of trial and temptation will come, most certainly come, sooner or later, upon all persons that dwell upon the earth, upon sinners as well as saints, upon hypocrites as well as sincere Christians; which trials will infallibly discover the faith and constancy of the one, the corruption and apostasy of the other: *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation*.

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Observe here, notwithstanding this church's constancy, yet Christ exhorts her to steadfastness, *Hold fast*; the steadiest and most steadfast Christians have need to be often cautioned and counselled against backsliding. Observe also, The encouragements which Christ gives his church to hold fast his innocency, fidelity, and patience: the first is drawn from the shortness of her sufferings, by reason of Christ's sudden coming, *Behold, I come quickly*, that is, to deliver my faithful people, and to destroy their enemies; the second is drawn from the hazard which they run of losing the crown, for want of an unfainting perseverance, *Hold fast, that no man take thy crown*. Where note, That only the persevering Christian shall be crowned, and that each persevering Christian shall have his own crown: there are probably differences of reward in heaven, as well as degrees of misery in hell; for quality the glory will be the same, they shall shine as the sun; for degree it will likely be differing, as much as one star differs from another in glory: *Let no man take thy crown*.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, &c.

In this verse Christ promises a threefold reward to them that finally overcome all the temptations and trials of this life. 1. They shall be *pillars* in God's temple, that is, honourable and glorious members of the triumphant glorified church, and shall have a fixed happiness therein; possibly the Holy Ghost here alludes to the pillars in Solomon's temple, which were very beautiful. 2. *They shall go no more out*; the pillars in Solomon's porch were removed and carried away by the Chaldeans, but these pillars shall be perpetual, their glorious state shall be a fixed, unchangeable state; when all the pillars of the earth shall tremble, these pillars in the temple of heaven shall remain immovable to eternal ages. 3. As in pillars erected by men their names were written and engraved; in like manner does Christ here promise the inscription of a threefold name upon these pillars, the name of God, the name of the city of God, and his new name. The name of God signifies the person to be an adopted child of God: the name of the city of God, declares such a person to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem, which is said to come down out of heaven: that is, the

knowledge of it comes down to us from God, else we had never known it, nor could ever have conceived of it: and Christ's new name, is that of the glorious Redeemer, and signifies him that overcometh shall be honoured as one of Christ's redeemed ones; the whole name put together, to wit, the name of God, the name of the city of God, and the new name, signifies an adopted son of God, and heir of the new Jerusalem, and a living member of Christ the glorified Redeemer; thus shall it be done to them whom Christ delighteth to honour: in the New Jerusalem above shall they spend an eternity in the rapturous and ravishing admiration of that love which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bestowed upon them, in making them first the adopted and now the glorified sons of God.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

This is again the close and conclusion of this, as it was before of all the epistles, in which Christ calls upon all persons to hear and consider what he saith by his Spirit to this church, and to lay it deeply to heart for their instruction and admonition. The council which is given by Christ to one particular church, he requires and expects should be applied to all, and improved by all.

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God: 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

This epistle to the Laodiceans is the seventh and last epistle which Christ commanded St. John at this time to write; most of the churches were found faulty before, but none like this here. Formality and hypocrisy, coldness and indifferency, in religion, had so far prevailed in this church, that we find nothing commended in them, nothing good spoken of them, and none of them exempted from the general charge brought in against them for that lukewarmness and hypocrisy. In this epistle now before us, Observe, 1. A description of Christ in his deservedly glorious titles: thus saith the *Amen, the faithful and true Witness*, that is, he that is verity and truth itself, both in his promises and his threatenings, who is holy, and cannot lie; righteous, and cannot deceive; wise, and

can never be deceived; therefore Christ takes upon him this name here of the faithful and true Witness, to awaken these drowsy hypocrites, to see and consider that he knows their state and condition, and will testify and witness against them. There is no such effectual remedy against hypocrisy, lukewarmness, and indifferency in the matters of religion, as a firm belief of Christ's omniscieny and veracity. The other title given to Christ, is *the beginning of the creation of God*; that is, *the beginner of the creation of God*, the original and first cause, by which all the creatures of God had their beginning. Christ is not only *principium principatum*, but *principium principians*; not the passive beginning, or he that first created, but the active beginning, or he by whom the creation was begun, both the old and new creation. Now Christ takes upon him this title, to encourage the Laodiceans to come unto him, (according to the invitation, given v. 18.) to recover them from their formality, seeing he is omnipotent, and can give a being and beginning to grace in the new creation as he did to nature in the old and first creation. Observe, 2. The reproof here given to this church of Laodicea, *I know thou art neither hot nor cold*; thou art not for open heresy or infidelity, but likest well a profession of Christianity; you receive the gospel, and so are not quite cold, but you want zeal to suffer any thing for it, and so are not at all hot; I see nothing in thee but a lukewarm indifferency, for which I disown thee, nay, disdain thee. Learn hence, 1. That Christ loathes lukewarm persons, who profess Christianity with reserves for worldly safety. These Laodiceans were neither enemies to Christ, nor true friends, but served God and gain, Christ and the world, by turns, as occasion served. Learn, 2. That though God abominates lukewarmness and want of zeal, yet he will not disown those who have any spark of true zeal, though defective and culpably remiss; he will not quench smoking flax, but blow it up into a holy flame; but all that have not so much zeal as to prefer Christ before the world, shall be accounted his enemies, and disowned by him.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy

nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.

Observe here, 1. This church's partial opinion of herself, her vanity and vain-glorious ostentation, accompanied with self-esteem: *she said she had need of nothing.*

Observe, 2. That this boasting and vain-glorious ostentation did very probably spring from, and was occasioned by, this church's worldly prosperity: *thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods.* We are apt to mistake the warm sun for God's blessing, and to apprehend when we are great that we are gracious; and because rich in goods, conclude ourselves rich in grace:

but, alas! God lifts up the light of his common providence upon thousands whom he does not lift up the light of his reconciled countenance upon. Observe, 3. Christ's impartial judgment concerning this church of Laodicea, *Thou sayest, thou art rich, and needest nothing: but I say, thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Behold here, How some have little or no grace, who yet conceit they have much grace; as some reckon their temporal, so there are others that value their spiritual, estate, at many thousands beyond what it really is, and when upon a just balance of account they are worth nothing. Ah, miserable souls! empty and guilty, poor and pennyless in spirituals, wanting every thing, but especially a sight and sense of their poverty and wants. Observe, 4. The counsel given by Christ to this church, very suitable to her condition: What pinches more than poverty! here is gold to enrich us. What shames us more than nakedness! here is a promise of raiment to clothe and cover us. What afflicts and grieves us more than blindness! here is eye-salve to anoint us. But observe the order of the words, 1. Christ says not, *I command thee*, but *I counsel thee*. O infinite condescension! the Lord Jesus does not always command like a king, but sometimes counsels like a friend; he counsels us by his Spirit, he counsels us by his ministers, he counsels us by our own consciences. 2. Christ's counsel is to *buy*; that is, earnestly to desire, and sincerely to endeavour, the procuring such spiritual blessings as we want: we buy with our prayers, our tears, our endeavours. 3. The blessings offered, *tried gold*, that will bear the touchstone, that faith and holiness which will give thee boldness in judgment. White raiment, or the merits of the Mediator, which covers our shame and nakedness out of the sight of God. And eye-salve, or the grace of

spiritual illumination, whereby we see the want and worth of these spiritual blessings.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Here Christ lets the Laodiceans understand, that although he had been sharp with them, in reproving them for their formality and lukewarmness, yet it was upon a merciful design towards them, it proceeded from a principle of love in him; for *as many as I love*, says Christ, *I rebuke and chasten.* Christ does not, therefore, love his children because he corrects them: but he therefore corrects them because he loves them. Name the favourite whom God loved too well to strike; nay, commonly there goes the severest exercises, where there has been the greatest love. Let not then God's chastenings of us abate our love to him; necessity compels God to correct; nothing is done by rods but what could not be effected without them: *Be zealous therefore, and repent.* As if Christ had said, O Laodicea! lay aside thy lukewarm indifferency, and be fervent in my service, repent, and amend your ways, if you would escape your chastening and rebukes, for I had much rather give you the kisses of my lips than the blows of my hand; if then you love not correction, prevent it by zeal and reformation.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

These words are very expressive of the tender love and gracious condescension of Christ towards poor sinners; full of heavenly rhetoric, to win and gain their hearts unto himself. Here observe, That man's heart is Christ's door, that this door of the heart is naturally shut, yea, locked and barred against Christ by ignorance and infidelity; that, notwithstanding this, Christ knocks graciously at the door of men's hearts by his word, by his rod, by his Spirit: knocking is a vehement motion, a reiterated motion, we knock again and again; a gradual motion, first more gently, then loudly; and it is a finite motion, men will not always continue knocking, but if none answer, they turn their backs and go their way. All the knocks of Christ will cease and end, his Spirit will not always strive. Farther observe, Christ doth not only knock, but stands knocking; it de-

notes the assiduity of Christ in waiting upon sinners, and his patience in knocking; standing is a waiting posture, it denotes an earnest desire and patient expectation. Observe, Though Christ knocks at the door of man's heart, he doth not break it open, he doth not offer violence to men's wills, and save them against their wills; but the Holy Spirit inclines them to hear Christ's voice, and enables them to open the door to him, causing them to approve of and consent to the offer and call of Christ. Observe, That the door is no sooner open, but Christ comes in, and supps with the sinner: his *coming* in denotes our union to him; his *supping*, our communion with him, imperfect on earth, complete in heaven; there is a mutual, sweet, and intimate communion between Christ and believers here on earth; there will be a perfect, complete, and uninterrupted communion with him in heaven, when they shall ever be with the Lord.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Here our Saviour concludes this epistle, as he did the former, with a promise to the persevering Christian, *To him that overcometh*, namely, all the trials and temptations of this life, and keeps his faith, love, and obedience, entire to the end, *I will grant*, not in a way of merit, but of free gift and grace, *to sit down with me in my throne*, namely, to partake of the same power, and glory, and kingdom, that I as Mediator do now partake of. Where observe, Christ here distinguishes between his own throne and his Father's; the former seems to be his mediatorial, the latter his essential, throne; and he plainly tells us, that as he obtained his glory by overcoming Satan and the world, so must we; *To him that overcometh will I grant—even as I also overcame*: the way to heaven for Christ and all his members is the same; as he conquered and finally overcame on earth before he was crowned in heaven, so must they.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Thus Christ shuts up this, as he did all the preceding epistles before, with a repeated exhortation to all Christians to the end of the world, to hear, read, attend unto, and observe, all the cautions and warnings, all the reproofs and counsels, all the promises

and threatenings, contained in this and the other epistles, as matters that do greatly concern all Christians to understand and know, *Let him that hath an ear, hear*.

CHAP. IV.

In the foregoing chapter we had St. John's first vision from Christ relating to the state and condition of the seven churches of Asia; in this he has a farther vision of the glorious and incomprehensible majesty of God in heaven, wherein were represented to his intellectual eye and sight God's celestial throne, his sitting upon his throne, his heavenly attendants, his awful presence, his displayed glory and unspeakable praises, as in the sequel of this chapter is declared.

AFTER this, I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven; and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

As if St. John had said, After my first vision was over, being desirous farther to understand and know the mind of God, I looked upwards to heaven, from whence divine revelations come, and it was represented to me as if a door were opened into the third heavens; and I apprehended, that I heard that former voice, which spake to me in the first chapter, now speaking to me again, namely, the voice of Christ, sounding like a trumpet in my ear, and saying, *Come up hither, and I will show thee*, or give thee a clear representation of, *things that shall be hereafter*. Where note, 1. That such a soul as has tasted the sweetness of communion with Christ, does long for the farther and fuller enjoyment of him. *After this I looked*: it was a gracious vision he had of Christ in the first chapter, but it did only whet his desires after more communion with him, and clearer manifestations from him. Note, 2. That the knowledge which advances and improves a man's understanding on earth, comes all from heaven, thither we must look up, and from thence seek, if we will know the things of God: *I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven*.

2 And immediately I was in the Spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

3 And he that sat, was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

I was in the Spirit; that is, in an ecstasy,

in a trance, in a rapture of delight and joy, ravished in spirit. This vision was represented to his mind more lively than any corporeal objects could be to his outward senses, which were now all bound up. Observe here, 1. The vision itself, *a throne set in heaven*; St. John's mind was not taken up with earthly matters: worldly crowns and sceptres were now poor things in his esteem, and will be so in the estimation of all others who have a prospect of a throne in heaven, as our apostle had. Observe, 2. The person whom he saw sitting upon his throne: God the Father in royal majesty, whose power and glory was represented by the similitude of precious stones, particularly by the jasper and sardine stone; which stone, say some, being of a red and fiery colour, represented how terrible God is in judgment, clothed with omnipotent power and inflexible justice; but to allay the terror of this vision, St. John saw a rainbow round about the throne, *in sight like unto an emerald*; this was very comforting, for the rainbow was of old a token of God's covenant, Gen. ix. that he would never more drown the world by water; here it denotes the covenant of grace, whereby the church is secured from the deluge of God's wrath by the blood of a mediator: and mark, this rainbow was round about the throne; let God look which way he will, here is that which reminds him of his covenant and promise; and the colour of this rainbow was like an emerald, that is, of a most pleasant and delightful greenness: signifying, That Almighty God, in mindfulness of his covenant, takes unspeakable delight and pleasure in the exercise of mercy towards his children, even then when he appears clothed with terror, to judge and sentence an impenitent world. Blessed be God, that he that sitteth upon the throne of judgment has a rainbow about him, giving full assurance, that for his covenant-sake, the floods of his wrath shall not overwhelm his children, when his enemies are swept away with the deluge of destruction.

4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

St. John having described Almighty God as sitting upon his throne in the former verse, here he declares whom he saw about the throne as assessors with him, namely, *Four and twenty elders*; by which some understand the patriarchs and apostles, as

representatives of the Jewish and Christian church; others understand hereby the whole body of private Christians, a certain number being put for an uncertain, who are represented, 1. *As round the throne*, to denote their nearness unto God, and their communion with him. 2. *As sitting*, to signify their state of rest and ease, and to denote their settled and secure condition of happiness which they now enjoy. 3. *As clothed in white raiment*, to represent their priestly dignity, that they were all priests unto God; as also their celestial purity and glory. 4. *As having on their heads crowns of gold*; this kingly dignity implying, that as kings they do and shall reign with Christ for ever and ever, who having loved them and washed them from their sins, in his blood, has made them kings and priests unto God. 5. They are called *elders*, to signify their great wisdom and experience; such as with patriarchs and apostles have done the greatest services to God on earth, shall share with him in the highest dignity and honour in heaven, sitting nearer the throne than others: St. John saw the elders not only near the throne, but sitting round about it.

5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices; and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.

By the throne God is represented as a judge: by the *thunderings*, and *lightnings*, and *voices*, is represented the terribleness of God in judging sinners. As the law was delivered upon mount Sinai in lightning and thunder, so will there be the same, nay, far greater dread and terror, when God comes to judge and plead with sinners for their wilful and repeated transgressions of that law. By the *seven lamps of fire burning before the throne*, some understand the Holy Spirit of God in its manifold gifts and graces; enlightening, quickening, warming, comforting the church of God; others understand the holy angels, who are continually waiting upon this judge, and attending of this judicature, who are as his eyes and feet, that is, his ready instruments to execute his pleasure. God, in the judgment of the great day, will be attended by his saints as assessors, by his angels as assistants.

6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal:—

By this *sea of glass* there seems to be an allusion to that large vessel of water in the temple called the brazen sea, in which Aaron and his sons did wash themselves

before they administered in holy things: signifying that purity which is required in all the worshippers, but especially in all the ministers of God: and because the use of this sea, in the temple, is made good in Christ, the laver of his blood might be signified by the sea of glass here represented, which is compared to crystal; denoting the spotless innocency of his person and sufferings, and the purity and clearness of his justified members. Others, by this sea of glass, will have the world represented to St. John's visionary view; the world (say they) is compared to a sea for its instability, tempestuousness, and uncertain motion; to a sea of glass, for its slipperiness, and for its brittleness: glass yields no good footing to any that stand upon it, nor does the world to any that stay themselves upon it; and to a sea of glass like crystal, because of the clearness and transparency of it to God; he sees quite through it, all the counsels and actions of men being naked and open before God and the throne. It follows,

—And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were* four beasts, full of eyes before and behind. 7 And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle. 8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

By the four beasts here understand the four evangelists in special, and all gospel ministers in general, who went forth to preach the word in all the quarters of the world: and here we have a most stately emblem of true gospel ministers; they have the courage of the lion, the strength of the ox, the loftiness of the eagle, the face, that is, the prudence and discretion of a man. Farther, they are described as *full of eyes*; they have eyes looking *before* them to God for direction, looking *behind* them to the flocks they lead, and *within* them to their own hearts. They have also six wings; with two they cover their faces, manifesting their deep reverence of God, with two they cover their feet, manifesting the humble sense of their infirmities, and with two they fly with cheerful expedition to the service of God. Observe next, what was represented to St. John, as the perpet-

ual employment and work of heaven; namely, incessantly to admire, love and praise, the holiness of God, which is the excellency of all his other excellences. *They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.* Learn hence, That the celebrating of the praises of the most high and holy God, is the incessant work of glorified saints and angels in heaven, and a very great part of the work and duty of the faithful ministers of God here on earth. Again learn, 2. From this example, how much it is the duty of the ministers of Christ to study and endeavour to make God known in all his glorious attributes, particularly in his holiness and his power; as also in his eternity and simplicity, as he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without variation and shadow of changing.

9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever. 10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns, before the throne, saying, 11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Observe here, 1. How St. John saw both beasts and elders, representing ministers and people, unitedly joining together; and with one consent sounding forth the high praises of their God; intimating, how the whole body of sincere Christians ought heartily to join with their faithful ministers in that blessed work of praising and worshipping the eternal God. Observe, 2. That as a farther act of homage and adoration, the four and twenty elders cast *their crowns down to the ground*; not in a way of contempt and disdain, as if they slighted the glory conferred upon them by God, but in a way of humble gratitude; attributing their victory and reward to God, and not to themselves, and acknowledging that whatever honour they have, they have it from God's hand, and are willing, very willing and ready to lay it down at God's feet, and to divest themselves of it, that they may put honour upon God; professing hereby, that all the goodness wrought in them, or done by them, does proceed from God's free grace and mercy, and that the glory of it is entirely due to him. Observe, 3. The hymn of thanksgiving itself, which was jointly sung among them. *Worthy art*

thou O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power. As if they had said, That God thou art, unto whom all the homage and adoration of thy creatures are justly and peculiarly due; for thou hast created all things by thy omnipotent power, and for thy pleasure and the manifestation of thy glory, they are still preserved as they were at first created. Where remark, That every moment's preservation is virtually a new creation, and that the same omnipotent power is necessary every moment to preserve us, which was at first requisite to create us. Therefore worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and everlasting praises, as thou art He who givest being to all creatures, and therefore givest it them, that they might love and laud, magnify and bless, glorify and serve, honour and obey, thee, their great creator and gracious preserver. *Amen.*

CHAP. V.

AND I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals.

In this chapter we have a continuation of the vision recorded in the former chapter; there St. John saw a throne set in heaven and a person sitting upon that throne in majesty and great glory, representing to him God the Father. Here he beholds the same glorious person sitting upon the throne with a book in his right hand, *written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.* Observe here, 1. What St. John saw, namely, a book, by which, Mr. Mede and others understand a roll, containing God's decrees and counsels, his purposes and resolutions, concerning the future state of the church, as they were to be fulfilled according to prophecy, and brought to pass in several ages as the providence of God should order and see fit. Observe, 2. The person in whose hand this book of the secret counsels of God was; namely, in God's own hand, and in his *right hand*, thereby denoting his authority to impart and communicate the knowledge of this sealed book to whom he pleased, and also his power to execute his purposes and counsels when he pleased, and as he pleased. And as none but God himself can declare who God is, so none but God himself can declare what God does, and what in after ages he will do. Observe, 3. The copious fulness of this book; it was written, *within, and on the back side*, inside and outside filled up so that there was no room left either for *addition or alteration.*

Observe, 4. It was a sealed book, yea, sealed with seven seals, denoting the matters that are therein contained to be most divine and excellent, secret and mysterious, certain and unalterable, and the knowledge of them impossible without the help and favour of special revelation.

2 I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. 4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. 5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

Observe, 1. Here is a proclamation made by an extraordinary angel, like an herald or officer, inquiring who was *worthy*, either in regard of *authority*, or in respect of *ability*, to open this book, and unloose the seals, that is, to disclose the secret counsels of God, and to make them known unto the sons of men, implying, that every angel in heaven is not worthy or meet to be the expositor of God's mind and mysteries unto man. Observe, 2. The great silence which there was in heaven upon this proclamation, amounting to an absolute and peremptory denial, that not any one, either in heaven or earth, or under the earth; not any angel in heaven, nor any saint living upon earth; not any dead saint under the earth, nor any devil or infernal spirit; was either worthy to open the book, or able to foresee or foretell the least event concerning the church, farther than revealed to them. Learn hence, That neither angels nor devils do understand the mysterious counsels of God, or can reveal future things to man, any farther than as God is pleased to reveal the same unto them. Observe, 3. St. John's great and bitter lamentation, because no person was found worthy to open the book, and reveal unto the church the secret counsels of God concerning her, *I wept much*; fearing, no doubt lest the church of God should be deprived of the benefit and comfort of this revelation. Such as are the true members of the church are greatly afflicted with all the providential dispensations of God which do befall her; but nothing goes so near them, as to have the mind and will of God

hidden and concealed from her. Observe, 4. A seasonable consolation given to St. John: one of the elders that were about the throne said to him, Weep not, for care is taken for the opening and revealing of the book. Christ, who is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Son of David, as man, and the root of David, as God, is found worthy, in regard of the divinity of his person, and the prevalence of his merits, to open unto the church all the mysteries of God, which are meet and convenient for her to understand and know. *Quest.* Why is Christ called the Lion of the tribe of Judah? *Ans.* In allusion to Jacob's blessing, *Gen. xlix.* where Judah is called a lion's whelp, denoting the dignity and superiority of that tribe above the rest. Now Christ descended of this tribe, and is called a lion, in regard of his kingly power and strength, in regard of his stoutness and courage, in regard of his mildness and clemency, and true nobleness of spirit, to them that submit and yield unto him, and in respect of his vigilancy and watchfulness over his church; all which are the known properties of the lion; and as that creature is the king of beasts, so is Christ King of kings, and Lord of lords, the only potentate; dominion and fear are with him. *Quest.* But how could Christ be called David's root, when we know that David did not spring from him, but he from David, according to the flesh? *Ans.* In a natural sense, David was the root of Christ; but in a spiritual sense, Christ was the root of David. David, as man, was the root of Christ: Christ, as Mediator and Godman, was the root of David. Thus he was both David's lord, and David's son, *Psal. cx. 1.*

6 And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. 7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. 8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out

of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Observe here, 1. That St. John had a vision of Christ in the former verse, under the representation of a lion: here he is represented under the form and figure of a lamb, as wounded, bloody, sacrificed, and slain: as bearing upon him the signs and scars, the marks and tokens of his by-past death: his appearing as a lamb slain, denoted his death; his stand, denoted his resurrection. *There stood a lamb, as it had been slain,* it is added—*having seven horns,* the strength of a beast lying in its horns; this expression of *seven horns* denotes that omnipotent power which Christ has in himself, and that fulness of power which he does exert and put forth on all occasions in defence of his church. It follows, *and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God;* these represent the Holy Spirit of God in its manifold graces given by Christ unto the church, as his agent and advocate upon earth; so that here in the text and context are all the three Persons in the Holy Trinity, whose divinity we believe, and in whom we trust; God the Father upon the throne, with a book in his hand: Christ the Lamb in the midst of the throne, opening the book: and the Seven Spirits, or Holy Ghost, distinct from the two former. Observe, 2. The office, which Christ, as Mediator God-man, performs; he goes to the throne, and takes the book out of the Father's hand, that is, he received power from God to open the book of mysteries, and to execute them: Christ sat upon the throne as God, but went to the throne for the book, as God-man; this power was due unto him as the reward of his sufferings. Observe, 3. The joyful acclamations accompanied with the profoundest adorations which were deservedly given by the holy inhabitants of heaven to Jesus Christ, as the only person worthy to take the book and open the seals: *They fell down before the Lamb, saying, Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us.* Note here, Divine worship given to Christ the Lamb, which proves his deity; they sing an hymn of divine praise to the blessed Redeemer, with harps, and golden vials in their hands,—*a new song:* that is, a most excellent song, setting forth the benefits, and extolling the praises of the Lord the Redeemer. Observe, 4. The church's celebration of those benefits and blessings, which by the death of Christ she had received, namely, 1. They were redeemed unto God out of every kindred and tongue, people and na-

tion; which shows the universal extent of the gospel church scattered over the face of the whole earth in and among all the nations of the world. 2. They were by him made kings and priests unto God, to reign on earth; that is, spiritual kings and priests unto God, to reign over sin, Satan, and the world, trampling their spiritual enemies under their feet, not expecting an earthly dominion.

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. 14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Observe here, 1. The office of the holy angels in heaven declared; they stand round about the throne of God continually, as nobles and chief ministers of state attend upon a prince, waiting his pleasure, and expecting his commands. Observe, 2. The numberless number of them, *thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand*; and as Almighty God is attended by an innumerable company of angels in heaven, so do the holy angels stand ready to accompany and protect his people here on earth, *Psal. xxxiv. 7. They encamp round about them.* Observe, 3. How readily and cheerfully the holy angels joined with the elders in blessing and praising Christ for the invaluable fruits and benefits of man's redemption: those beneficent spirits rejoice in our happiness; they joy at the conversion of a sinner, and triumph at the glorification of a saint. Here they are said to sing with a *loud voice*, to show their affection and zeal in the work of blessing and praising God for Jesus Christ, who is an head of confirmation to them, as he was an head of redemption unto us. Observe, 4. How the angels give the same worship,

pay the same homage, ascribe the same honour to Christ, which they do to God the Father: this had never been given, had he not been essentially God: the angels pronounce and proclaim Jesus Christ worthy of omnipotent power; and that honour, glory, and blessing, do appertain to him for evermore. Observe lastly, That not only all the angels, but all the creatures in heaven, in earth, under the earth, and in the sea, all and every one of them, do worship Christ with religious worship, and pay him divine honour; adore him that sits on the throne, and the Lamb, for ever and ever: that is, the rational part of the world, to wit, angels and men, actively; the sensitive part of the world, objectively; the diabolical part, passively: Christ extorts that glory from them by their torments, which they refuse to give unto him by confessions and voluntary acknowledgments. What greater argument than this can we desire for our satisfaction, that Christ is truly and essentially God? He thinks it no robbery to be equal with God, to share with him in all that honour and homage, in all that adoration and religious worship, which the whole creation do pay to Almighty God; for thus do the angels and elders above, and the whole church-militant here below, chant forth the praises of the Creator and Redeemer, saying,

*Blessing, and glory, and renown,
We now give all together,
To him that on the throne sits down,
And to the Lamb for ever.
Amen, Hallelujah.*

CHAP. VI.

AND I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts, saying, Come and see. 2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him; and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

The former chapter acquainted us with Christ's receiving of the sealed book; this with the opening of it seal by seal. Christ reveals unto St. John the deep counsels of God, which were hidden and secret: the only-begotten Son, that lay in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed them; he only received authority, and he only was endued with ability to reveal them. Note, 1. The preparation made for St. John's vision of the seals; he standing afar off with profound reverence, heard a voice like thun

der proceeding out of the mouth of one of the four beasts, who performed the office of a public crier, saying, *Come and see*. It is dangerous searching into God's secrets, and prying into his hidden councils, until we have a call and commission, a command and invitation, from God himself so to do; thus had St. John here; one said unto him, *Come near, and see*. Note, 2. The vision itself, *I beheld a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown, &c.* By the white horse is generally understood the gospel, so called in regard of the divinity and spotless purity of its doctrine: the rider upon this horse is Christ, who rode swiftly in the ministry of the apostles, and other faithful teachers in the first ages of Christianity; and he rode with a bow in his hand, and a crown on his head: with a bow, that is, with threatenings and terrors denounced against his enemies before they were inflicted upon them, as the bow is first held in the hand, then the arrow prepared upon the string, and at last shot forth: and with a crown, denoting that royal state of kingly dignity and honour to which Christ, the Lamb that was slain, was now exalted; and thus he rode on conquering and to conquer, until he had consummated his victories, in a glorious triumph over his enemies, namely, in the conversion of some, and destruction of others; thus the opening of the first seal gave the church a very encouraging and comfortable prospect of the victories, successes and triumphs, of Christ, notwithstanding the rage, subtlety, and power, of all his enemies: Christ rode on with a bow in his hand, and with a crown on his head, conquering and to conquer, until his arrows were sharp in the hearts of his crucifiers; and will thus ride on till the people fall under him, and all his enemies become his footstool.

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, *Come and see*. 4 And there went out another horse *that was red*; and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another; and there was given unto him a great sword.

The second seal opened did represent to St. John's visionary view a *red horse*, of a bloody colour; denoting first the dreadful execution of God's wrath upon the Jews, embroiling the land with wars, divisions, bloodshed, unpeaceable tumults, killing and ruining one another, to which purpose he apprehended that he saw a sword

in his hand that rode upon this horse, signifying the great slaughter which would be committed by the Jews upon one another. Others, secondly, by this *red horse* understand the bloody Roman emperors, Nero, Trajan, &c., and the persecution which the primitive church underwent in their days. Eusebius relates, that so fierce was their rage against the poor Christians, that a man might see cities full of dead bodies, old and young, men and women, cast out naked, without any reverence of persons, or regard to sex. From hence we may learn, What little reason the Christian church has to think strange of the fiery trial, as if some strange things happened unto them; when as we see all the rage and cruelty, all the blood and violence, which the Christian church has fallen under in the several ages of it, have been from the beginning revealed and prophetically foretold.

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, *Come and see*. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

The third seal opened, sets forth the great calamity which should befall the church by famine, which some understand literally, others figuratively and mystically. 1. A literal famine in Judea, seems here to be prefigured by a person riding on a black horse, with a balance to weigh food in his hand: famine discolours the face of men, and makes them look black, sad, and dismal; accordingly it is represented by a black horse; and the rider having a pair of scales in his hand to weigh corn by the pound, and not to measure it by the bushel, imports the great scarcity that there should be in bread; and St. John heard a voice saying, *A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny*. The Roman penny was the ordinary wages for a day's work to a labourer, so that the quantity of bread was but sufficient to keep persons alive for one day. Famine is a very sore and terrible judgment, it consumes a people by piecemeal: other judgments cut off suddenly, but this is a lingering and languishing death. Lord! help us in the midst of our fulness, when we eat the fat, and drink the sweet, to re-

member how righteously thou mayst cut us short of our abused mercies. How is it that we have not long ago sinned away our plenty, who have so often sinned with our plenty? 2. Others understand the famine, here represented by the black horse, to be meant of a spiritual famine, a scarcity of the word of God, which fell out in the time of the ten persecutions, when the storm fell upon the bishops and most useful ministers in the church, when many bright and burning lamps were extinguished, others hid under a bushel: a dismal, gloomy day, when the church of God did eat her spiritual bread by weight, when all the spiritual food men could get to keep their souls alive from day to day could be but sufficient for that end.

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 8 And I looked, and behold, a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and hell followed with him: and power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

The fourth seal opened represents a pale horse, (pestilence,) with *death* riding upon it; and *hell*, that is, the grave, followed it: denoting, say some, all the calamities of sword, pestilence, and famine, which Christ (St. Mark xiii.) foretold should come upon the Jews, and cause an universal devastation of their city and nation, and as universal a destruction of their persons. Note here, 1. How death is represented as sitting upon a pale horse; by a horse, for his strength, there is no resisting of him; for his swiftness, it is always posting towards us; for his office and use, which is to cut off, and carry away; and by a pale horse, for its ghastliness. Death has a grim and ghastly countenance, that strikes terror into all hearts, and paleness into all faces. Note, 2. As terrible as death was, it must and did receive power before it could destroy and kill: *I beheld a pale horse, and he that sat on him was death, and hell followed with him: and power was given to them.* Learn thence, That all the executioners of God's wrath and vengeance, sword, pestilence, and famine, death of all kinds, do act by commission, yea, they all come forth with limited commission; power was given to them. Others conceive, that by this pale horse the persecution of the primitive church was represented under the Pagan

emperors, who made her face look pale like death, by the loss of a vast quantity of blood and spirits, when the church was mowed down like a meadow, and sprang as fast.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

Here we have the fifth seal opened; under which Christ represents to St. John the condition of those precious souls of the holy martyrs who died for the testimony of Christ, by the bloody hands of tyrants; the design whereof is to support and encourage all that were to come after in the same bloody path. Observe here, 1. The vision which St. John saw, namely, the souls of the martyrs. But how could they be seen? *Ans.* Not by the external senses, being immaterial substances, but in *spirit* they were seen by him; he had a spiritual representation of them made to his mind. Observe, 2. The place where he saw them, *under the altar*; that is, lying at the foot of the altar, as sacrifices slain, and presented unto God. Where note, That however men look upon the death of the martyrs, yet in God's account they die as sacrifices: and their blood is no other than a drink-offering poured out to God, which he highly prizeth, and graciously accepteth. Observe, 3. The cause of their sufferings and death described, it was for *the word of God, and for the testimony which they held*; as one of the martyrs in the Marian days held up his Bible at the stake, saying, "This is that hath brought me hither." They die not as malefactors, but as martyrs, giving a threefold testimony of the truth, a lip-testimony, a life-testimony, and a death or blood-testimony: they held the profession of their faith faster than they held their own lives. Observe, 4. What St. John heard, *a loud cry, saying, How long?* Note, 1. That souls can speak audibly, to the ears of men; Note, 2. That they have sense of

sufferings when they are in glory: it doth not imply that souls there are in a restless state, or that they want true satisfaction and repose when they are out of the body; much less, 3. doth this cry suppose that they carried with them to heaven any angry resentments, or revengeful dispositions, towards their murderers: but this cry supposes in them a vehement zeal for the glory of God, a flagrant desire that God would clear their innocency, and make known his justice among men, that he would abolish the kingdom of Satan, and consummate the kingdom of Christ, making all his enemies to become his footstool; so that they pray for what Christ waits in glory, *Heb. x. 13.* all the revenge here desired was only a vindication of God's holiness and truth, which he himself had promised. Observe, 5. The gracious answer which God gave to the cry of these gracious souls, in which he speaks satisfaction to them these two ways, 1. By somewhat given them for the present, 2. By somewhat promised them hereafter. First, white robes were given at present to every one of them, that is, large measures of heavenly glory, as the reward of their sufferings and services, beyond other saints; as if God had said, "Though the time be not yet come to satisfy your desires in the final ruin of Satan's kingdom, yet it shall be well with you in the mean time, you shall walk with me in white, and enjoy my glory in heaven." Secondly, That is not all, but the very things they cry for shall be given them after a little season, for God had more to call unto sufferings besides them, and they having conquered shall be crowned together; as if God had said, "You my faithful witnesses, wait a little while until your brethren be got through the Red sea of suffering as well as you, and then you shall see the feet of Christ upon the necks of all his enemies, and justice shall fully avenge the precious innocent blood of all the saints, which in all ages has been shed for the testimony of the gospel, from Abel the martyr to the last sufferer: *Rest, for a little season, until your fellow-servants also, and your brethren, shall be killed as you were.*" Now from the whole learn these lessons of instruction. Learn, 1. That the souls of men perish not with their bodies, but do certainly outlive them, and subsist in a state of separation from them; the bodies of these martyrs were destroyed by divers sorts of torments, but their souls were out of the reach of danger, they were in safety under the altar, and in glory, clothed with their white robes, when their bodies were either turned to ashes, or torn to pieces by wild beasts;

we shall not cease to be, when we cease to breathe; our souls do not vanish with our breath. Learn, 2. That as the soul is alive in a state of separation from the body, so it is awake also, and doth not sleep with the body. Mark, These souls *cried with a loud voice*; then they were not asleep, though their bodies were asleep in the dust; the opinion of the soul's sleeping with the body, until the resurrection, is a wicked dream; it is granted that the organical acts of the soul, that is, such acts as do depend upon the members of the body, must cease when the body ceases; but we find when we are asleep, that our soul can act of itself, without the assistance of the body; the soul grieves and rejoices, hopes and fears, chooses and refuses, therefore the soul is not only alive, but awake also, in its state of separation from the body. Learn, 3. That there are not only praises, but prayers in heaven, and that for justice to be inflicted upon persecutors here on earth. O the miserable condition of bloody persecutors! when heaven and earth both pray against them. Learn, 4. That there is no sin committed upon earth, which doth more loudly call for vengeance from God in heaven, and which he will more certainly and severely punish, than persecuting and wronging of his saints and servants. Learn, 5. That one reason why the suffering servants of God are not presently delivered from their persecutions, is this, because more of their brethren must suffer besides them, before their persecutions are ripe and ready for signal vengeance. Learn lastly, That the souls of God's martyrs shall be under the altar in heaven clothed in white, enjoying divine glory, before the fatal day of final vengeance come upon the persecuting world; for though the patience of God suffers long, yet the holiness of God cannot permit that innocency should always suffer, and violence with persecution go unpunished, but in the mean time they shall put on their crown and their robes.

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood: 13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind: 14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places

A threefold interpretation is given relating to this sixth seal, and the opening of it. 1. Some apply it altogether to the Jews, and that their destruction in Judea and at Jerusalem was so dismal, that it was represented to St. John as the darkening of the sun, and the moon looking like blood, and the stars falling, such calamities impending as if heaven and earth were dissolving: doubtless at and before the destruction of Jerusalem there was a confluence of such calamities, so dismal, and so dreadful, as can very difficultly be represented or described. 2. Others apply it to the overthrow of Paganism, and the destruction of the Heathen emperors; the fall of Paganism, by means of Constantine's conversion to the Christian faith, was the most terrible judgment that ever fell upon the devil's kingdom: and accordingly, by the earth's quaking, the sun's becoming black, the moon's becoming blood, and the stars falling from heaven to earth, is to be understood the great changes that were made in the Roman empire, by overturning the whole Pagan state, and making Christianity the religion of the greatest part of the world; so that the sense of the foregoing expression is metaphorical, and signifies a great and general alteration of the face of affairs, as if the world was to be another thing. But, 3. There are that interpret all this of the great and horrible confusion of the Christian world under Antichrist, when Christ the Sun of righteousness began to be obscured, that is, his doctrine concerning his offices and benefits darkened; the moon or church turned into blood; the stars or pastors fallen from heavenly offices; the scriptures, like the heavens rolled up, forbidden to be read; the mountains, kings and princes, in jeopardy; and the islands brought under Antichrist's yoke and tyranny. Lastly, Some apply all this to the last dissolution of the world, and the final judgment of the great day; according to what follows in the three next verses.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free-man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; 16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Observe here, That if this was meant of the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem, it was exceeding dreadful, and bespake all sorts of men, from the highest to the lowest, to be under a most dreadful consternation, when they saw an inevitable vengeance coming upon them for crucifying Christ, and persecuting his members, which made them run into rocks, and call upon mountains to hide them: if it be applied to the judgment of the great day, it shows the justice of Christ in forcing those to call upon the mountains to hide them, who by persecution had driven his members to hide themselves in mountains, dens, and caves, of the earth: any sort of hope of deliverance would be then welcome; but, alas! all help will fail, and all hope will be then in vain; neither greatness nor numbers will save any from misery and terror, when that day of vengeance is come. Learn hence, That wicked men, how numerous, how powerful and strong soever, shall fall before the wrath and indignation of Christ; if when Christ appears like an angry Lamb the greatest in the world fall before him, what will they then do when Christ shall put on the fierceness and severity of a roaring lion? *Mitissima sententia quæ a mitissima judice denuntiatur.* If the wrath of the Lamb cannot be borne, if the unbelieving kings and potentates of the earth shall be cast down at the sight of Christ, where shall the wicked and the sinner appear? If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, what will the wrath of God, an angry God, be? Let us now be cast down at the sight of sin, and we shall not be cast down hereafter at the sight of God; but when others, at his appearance, cry to the rocks to cover them, and to the mountains to fall upon them, such as have seen sin to their abasement and humiliation, shall see a Saviour to their joyful satisfaction, and spend an eternity in the rapturous contemplation and ravishing fruition of him. Amen.

CHAP. VII.

The former chapter gave us a general view and description of God's terrible vengeance on his church's enemies, that is, upon the obstinate Jews in Judea, the crucifiers of the Son of God, say some; upon the Pagan world, or Heathen emperors, say others, under whom the Christian church suffered a bitter and bloody persecution for the first three hundred years, namely, till the time of Constantine the Great.

Now the following chapters give an account of the execution of those denounced temporal judgments upon the Jews, according to some; or, according to others, they represent the dark kingdom of Antichrist, wherein a great storm of heresy did arise, and a flood of errors and false doctrines did flow down to the corrupting

such vast numbers, that the whole world is said to wonder after the beast. Lest then the faithful should faint, as if the apostasy would be universal, and the Christian church totally fail, Almighty God declares to St. John his pleasure in this chapter, to seal an hundred forty-four thousand, that is, to preserve a very, very great number, from the stroke of this judgment, be it temporal or spiritual; if temporal, he would mark them, as he did the Israelites in Egypt, that the destroyer might pass over them; if spiritual, he would preserve a number in his church, which should not apostatize: so that the church should not fail, a number of sealed ones, having the promise of preservation from God.

AND after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

Observe here, 1. That if a temporal judgment on the Jews be here intended, then this vision represented to St. John God's decree and purpose for suspending the dreadful execution of the threatened and intended vengeance upon Judea for a time, namely, until God had sealed his number, that is, marked them for preservation, according to *Ezek. ix. 4. Set a mark upon the forehead of the men, &c.* that is, preserve the penitent believers from the common destruction, as the Israelites were preserved in Egypt from the destroying angel. *I beheld four angels*, that had power to inflict judgments, famine, sword, and pestilence, (foretold chap. vi.) upon Judea; *I beheld these angels making a stay and stop*, before they would suffer those mischiefs to break forth upon the earth. Where note, That the office of the holy angels in heaven is at God's command, and by God's direction, to execute vengeance, and to inflict all temporal judgments upon obstinate sinners here on earth; yet glad they are when it pleases God to stay and stop them from a speedy execution of his wrath and vengeance; for as judgment is God's strange work, in which he does not delight, so neither is it pleasing to the angels as an act of punishment, but only in obedience to the command of God, and with an eye and respect to the glory of God. Observe, 2. That if a spiritual judgment be here intended, as others apprehend, namely, the calamities befalling the church by reason of an apostasy under Antichrist, then by the *winds* they understand heresies and false doctrines of all sorts, which have an impetuous force and violence, like winds, to drive unstable souls from their steadfastness in the truths of God, into damnable errors. Now God takes special care that

these winds should not blow, these anti-Christian errors and false doctrines should not overflow the earth, until he had sealed his people, that is, secured them from that danger, preserving them from spiritual defilement, as the undoubted fruit of their sealing; where we see, that in all times of public calamity, be it temporal or spiritual, God has a special care of his own, and bears a special regard unto his own; here he commands the angels to hold the winds from smiting the earth until the number of his sealed ones was completed.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

Observe here, 1. The special and distinguishing care which God took of his church and faithful people before he suffered the approaching storm to come upon the world: he did by another angel cry to the four angels that were ready, as God's executioners, to hurt the earth, that they should hurt nothing until the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads; and his crying with a loud voice intimates his great care to preserve his faithful ones. *Quest.* What was this sealing? *Ans.* Some understand it of an external visible sealing, by setting a mark upon their foreheads for preservation, according to *Ezek. ix. 4. the letter Tau*; doubtless there was some notification made by Almighty God to the destroying angels, of every one whom he would have preserved. Others do understand this seal to be internal, by sanctification; and from whence we may gather, that inward holiness is the best guard against temporal or spiritual judgments. But take this sealing in either sense, either for an outward or inward sealing, the notion doth imply, 1. That the persons sealed are of precious and excellent esteem with God. 2. It imports preservation and security from danger: God sealeth his people, that the destruction coming upon others may escape them: thus here God's servants were sealed, that they might be preserved: that they are kept either from sin and error, or from judgment and danger, is not from themselves, but from God's care and love towards them in the sealing of them, the angel said, *Hurt not the earth, &c. till we have sealed the servants of our God, &c.*

4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.* 5 Of the tribe of Judah *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Reuben *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Gad *were sealed twelve thousand.* 6 Of the tribe of Aser *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Nephthalim *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Manasses *were sealed twelve thousand.* 7 Of the tribe of Simeon *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Levi *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Issachar *were sealed twelve thousand.* 8 Of the tribe of Zebulun *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Joseph *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Benjamin *were sealed twelve thousand.*

Observe here, 1. That the true church is represented in this book by the name of the Jews, and the false church by the Gentiles; so that by the tribes of the children of Israel is to be understood the whole universal church of sincere and serious Christians, all that profess and practice the faith of Abraham, and so are his spiritual seed. Note, 2. That these hundred forty and four thousand are particularly mentioned, chap. xiv. 1. as the pure virgin church, distinguished from the adulterers; this number then comprehends all such as during Antichrist's tyranny should be kept from his delusions, of whatsoever nation they be; all that adhere to Christ against Antichrist are sealed, to preserve them from that defection wherein others would be involved. Note, 3. The great care which Almighty God takes in a time of general apostasy, to preserve a number in all his churches from that fatal mischief, that the Catholic church may not fail: God has a number sealed: and such as are sealed shall be preserved. Note, 4. That though the number of God's sealed ones be great in itself, one hundred and forty-four thousand, yet how small is it in comparison of the not sealed. Note, 5. That as God had a number out of all the tribes of Israel, so doth he gather to himself a people out of all nations, ranks, and conditions of men, in and throughout the whole world. Note, 6. That the tribe of Dan is here left out; the reasons assigned for it are various; because, say some, Antichrist was

to come of that tribe: but it doth not any where appear that ever Almighty God punished a people before they committed sin. Others with more reason conceive it was the great idolatry which this tribe fell into, and continued in until the captivity, see *Judg. xviii. 30.* and *Amos viii. 14.* yet we must not suppose that none of this tribe were saved, because here not mentioned; for we find Samson of this tribe, and reckoned among those worthies, whose names are recorded, *Heb. xi. By faith Samson.* Note, 7. That Levi, or the Levites, who had no inheritance in the earthly Canaan, but were dispersed and scattered throughout all the tribes, that they might teach the people the law of the Lord, and so could not be numbered there; yet, says the learned and pious Dr. Hammond, in Christ their portion was as good as the rest, and therefore were not omitted *here.* Behold here a consideration which administers much comfort to us the ministers of the gospel: though many of us have no earthly possessions, and some cut short of outward comforts, yet our title to the heavenly inheritance is good, and we shall not miss of it as the reward of our faithfulness. Note lastly, That although Levi had the charge of all the tribes, and had the peculiar favour above all the rest to stand before God, and administer to him in holy things, yet no more are sealed of this than of the other tribes; all were teachers, but all were not sealed; all are not saved that are of the holy calling, and who may be instrumental to save others. It was a solemn speech of an ancient father, *Non temere dico, sed ut affectus sum, ac ut animo sentio: Revere puto sacerdotes non multos esse qui salvi fient, et plures esse qui pereunt.* With it agrees St. Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 27. Fearing, lest having preached to others, he himself should become a cast-away.

9 After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. 11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, 12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and

honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

St. John having had in the former verses a visionary view of the church militant, under the denomination of *sealed ones*, in these verses a prospect is given him of the church triumphant in heaven; a most magnificent description of which we have here before us. Where note, 1. The triumphant church above is described by its multitude: *A numberless number which no man can number*; according to the promise made to Christ, of bringing many sons unto glory. 2. They are described by their variety; some out of every nation, tribe, people, and language, according to that of our Saviour, Matt. viii. 11. *They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.* 3. They are described by their posture, they stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, as servants attending upon their Lord, a most happy station, and as such accounted by them; not that they stand perpetually gazing upon God, and doing nothing else, but they express their love unto him, by attending upon him, to execute his commands. 4. They are described by their habit: *They are clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands*; white garments import their dignity, their purity, their joy. The saints' dignity in heaven is great, they are kings and priests unto God; their purity great, being purified as he is pure; their joy great, being entered into the joy of their Lord, this joy being too great to enter into them. Note farther, How these glorified saints do ascribe all their glory, happiness, and salvation, to Christ, and nothing to themselves, *Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. Sancti quasi sanguine tincti*, say some; "Many of these saints were martyrs, that shed their blood for Christ." But mark, Their garments were made white, not in their own blood, but in the blood of the Lamb. Again, They are described *with palms in their hands*, as well as clothed in white. Now this denotes their victory, and the rewards of their victory. Palms were amongst the Roman ensigns of their victory. All the saints enter heaven with palms in their hands, having conquered sin, Satan, and the world, and the whole host of spiritual enemies. Observe next, How the holy angels in heaven do join with these saints and martyrs in worshipping God, and adoring the Lamb, ver. 11. *And all the angels stood round about the throne, and fell on their faces and worshipped*

God, concurring with the church in their congratulations, adding their *Amen* to what the palm-bearers had said, and much more of their own, ascribing *blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, unto him for ever and ever.* Where note, how the triumphant church is made up of an innumerable company of angels, as well as saints: *Heb. xii. besides the spirits of just men made perfect, makes mention of an innumerable company of angels, as part of the church of the first-born.* (*Angeli oragum Sancti Annuntiant debent Christo, Mediatori*, says one.) And St. Paul, Ephes. i. 10. says, *That in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.* Whence it appears, that though angels sinned not, yet Christ gathered them and us into one society, and is an head both to them and us.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14 And I said unto him, Sir, Thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

As if John had said, One of the elders, not out of ignorance as to himself, but out of desire to inform me, asked me, Whether, I knew what these were that stood arrayed in white? And I told him I did not know, but desired him to inform me. He replied, They were such as had suffered great tribulation for Christ, and were now accepted of him, and dignified by him; not for their own worthiness, but for the sake of his sufferings. Note here, 1. The present state and condition of the church of God, and members of Christ in this world, they are *in tribulation*, yea, in great tribulation here; as long as there is a devil in hell, and wicked men upon earth, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer tribulation. Note here, 2. The future state which they shall be advanced to, they shall come out of great tribulation; the saints' sharp sufferings and persecutions shall have a joyful issue and glorious end. Yet note, 3. That though the cross was the way to the crown, yet the cross did not merit the crown; their sufferings would not, could

not, bring them to heaven. without having their souls washed in the blood of the Lamb, much less could their sufferings merit and purchase heaven; but it pleased God of his free grace thus to reward their sufferings. They were washed in the blood of the Lamb, whose blood paid the price of their salvation. Note, 4. The description which is here given of heaven; it is called a temple, in allusion to the Jewish temple, in which God dwelt of old; as God by his gracious presence dwelt in his temple on earth, so by his glorious presence he dwells among his glorified saints in his temple in heaven; and accordingly the glorified saints in heaven do temple-service, they worship God continually, and serve him day and night. In allusion, this is probably spoken to the priests standing in the material temple, and serving in their courses night and day, *Psal. cxxiv. 1.* Heaven is a place of employment and service, as well as of pleasure and joy; and the greatest joy results from the greatest service.

16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17 For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Here St. John proceeds in giving a farther description of the place and state of the blessed; he acquaints us both with the private evils they shall be everlastingly delivered from, as also with the positive good they shall eternally rest in. As to the former he assures us that glorified souls shall be acquainted with no wants, and exposed to no afflicted providences. *They shall neither hunger nor thirst*; that is, they shall be in a condition free from all, and all manner of wants whatsoever. *Neither shall the sun, nor the heat, light upon them*; that is, the scorching heat of persecution, to which they were exposed here, shall never more affect or afflict them there. *And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes*, that is, all cause of sorrow and mourning shall everlastingly cease. Farther, He acquaints us with the positive good which the glorified saints do eternally rest in; the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them, that is, Christ shall satisfy them with a satiety of joy, and fulness of pleasure; and lead them to the living fountains of water: that is, to the never-failing comforts of God's presence. O happy place and state!

which will at once cause the saints to forget all former sorrows for time past, and happily prevent any farther cause of affliction and sorrow for time to come; where no sin shall afflict them, no sorrow affect them, no danger affright them, where all tears shall be wiped from their eyes, all sorrows banished from their hearts, and everlasting joys shall possess their souls; where they shall obey their God with vigour, praise him with cheerfulness, love him above measure, fear him without torment, trust him without despondency, serve him without lassitude and weariness, without interruption or distraction, being perfectly like unto God, as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality. Lord, strengthen our faith, in the belief of this desirable happiness, and set our souls a-longing for the full fruition and final enjoyment of it.

CHAP. VIII.

AND when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

When he had opened, that is, when the Lamb, who opened the six foregoing seals, did open the seventh, there was silence in heaven about half an hour, by way of allusion to what was done in the temple at the time of offering incense. The end of which silence was to give St. John an opportunity to contemplate those high mysteries which he had revealed to him, and to prepare him for new visions, as silence is cried before the proclamation of great and weighty matters. When great things are to be uttered, great attention is expected, and great silence prepares for great attention.

2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

Observe here, 1. The readiness of the holy angels to execute the will of God at all times: *They stand before God*, namely, to minister at his pleasure, and to execute judgments at his command; whether these were good angels or bad, it is not material to dispute, seeing God makes both the executioners of his judgments when he pleases. Observe, 2. The number of these angels, they were seven, and no more, because it pleased not God to pour down his whole wrath at once upon the rebellious world, but at divers times, and gradually. Observe, 3. That to these seven angels were given seven trumpets to publish God's judg-

ments to the world. These trumpets signified that God would proceed against the world in fearful hostility, and appear against it as an enemy to battle, proclaiming as it were open war, with sound of trumpet, and beat of drum, and hanging out a flag of defiance against it. The patience of God, though lasting, will not be everlasting. These angels sounding the alarm of judgments before they did inflict these following dreadful judgments upon the world, shows that God warns before he strikes: he doth usually pre-admonish before he punisheth. Judgment is his strange work, he delights not in it: but when sin calls upon him to arise out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, he doth it with unspeakable reluctance and regret, like a tender-hearted father, with a rod in his hand, and tears in his eyes.

3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

Observe here, That all along in the visions which St. John had, a representation was made to his mind of things pertaining to the Jewish worship: his visionary temple, the altar, the incense, the fire, the censer, which he saw, were in allusion to the material temple, and to the worship and service performed there at Jerusalem; and accordingly this other angel here mentioned, represented the High-priest, (who was an illustrious type of our Lord Jesus Christ,) whose office it was to offer incense at the altar, and therewith to offer up prayers for the people. Observe farther, That Christ is here represented as having a golden censer, whereas the high-priest's was only of brass, to denote that he was a more excellent high-priest; and the much incense given to him, represents his abundant merits, whereby he renders the prayers of all his saints acceptable to his Father. Learn hence, That as Christ was the only Mediator of redemption, so is he also the only Mediator of intercession; his

mediation is founded upon his satisfaction: none had to do with the censor to offer incense, but he that had to do with the altar to offer sacrifice. Who durst offer to intercede with an offended God on the behalf of sinners, but he that hath first satisfied the justice of God for sin? Now to satisfy an offended God is Christ's peculiar, therefore to intercede with God authoritatively, on the behalf of offenders, is Christ's sole prerogative. Again, Christ's intercession gives virtue and effect to our supplications. This truth was signified, *ver. 4.* where it is affirmed, *That the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand;* that is, the virtue and efficacy of the Mediator's merits, which came up with the prayers of the saints, and perfumed them, did both plead for and procure acceptance with God. Behold here is the true reason why our poor and broken supplications do find acceptance with God; namely, because perfumed with the odours of Christ's merits, and presented to the Father by his own mediation and intercession. The Father heareth him always, and so he doth all them whose prayers are offered by him. Observe lastly, The success and efficacy of the saint's prayers thus perfumed and presented unto God; there followed *voices, and thunders, and lightnings*, signifying the wonderful effects of prayer, or the terrible things that would follow after their prayers, even dreadful judgments upon the earth, that is, upon the land of Judea, say some; upon the Roman empire, say others. However it was, we may gather thus much from it, That in times of national provocation, the fervent prayers of God's faithful servants have a mighty prevalency with God, for staying off for a time national ruin and destruction.

6 And the seven angels, which had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound. 7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees were burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

Note here, 1. The readiness of the holy angels in heaven to execute the will and pleasure of God here on earth; they knew that the execution of God's judgments was to be performed by them, and accordingly they prepare themselves for it. Note, 2. The judgments denounced by the first angel, *Fire and hail mingled with blood.* A strange storm, alluding probably to one of the plagues of Egypt, mentioned *Exod. ix.*

denoting, some say, direful temporal judgments which God would bring upon Judea in general, and Galilee in particular, by bloodshed and insurrections. The trees, says Dr. More, signify the great men, and the grass the common people. Others by this storm of hail and blood understand a spiritual judgment, namely, an inundation of heresy upon the Christian church, which is of a fiery and bloody nature; wherever it prevails, it is a dreadful plague, and a consuming storm; justly inflicted by God upon a people for their contempt of the gospel, and not receiving the truth in the love of it, that they might be saved.

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood: 9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

Observe here, 1. The universality of the judgment inflicted; the former judgment was upon the earth, this upon the sea: that no place might escape, a storm of hail and blood falls upon the former, a mountain of burning fire is cast into the latter; both signifying increased wars and bloodshed by sea and land, according to some; the mighty prevalency of error and heresy, say others, and particularly of the Arian heresy, which puffs up and swells with pride, and is the harbinger and forerunner of ruin and destruction; as only by pride cometh contention, so after pride, or along with pride, cometh destruction.

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters: 11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood: and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

The next judgment inflicted, or rather the farther progress of the former judgment, was the infecting of the waters and rivers with a mortal bitterness by a bitter star falling from heaven into them; denoting, some say, the fall of a great captain amongst the Jews in Judea; others understand it of heresy in general, of the Arian heresy in particular; and some apply it to

the fall of Rome, the seat of the western empire; so Mr. Mede. If it be understood of heresy, it shows us what a poisonous, bitter, and deadly nature, error and heresy is of. Error is as damnable as vice, the one is an open road, the other a by-path, to hell and destruction; and accordingly that person, and that people, which have a due care over their soul's salvation, will be as much afraid of erroneous principles as of debauched practices.

12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. 13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

Observe here, 1. That by the sun, moon, and stars, in scripture prophecies, the potentates and powers of a state are understood: accordingly the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, signifies generally the fall of some great powers, either ecclesiastical or civil; others, who interpret these judgments spiritually by the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, do understand the prevalency of ignorance and error in the church, occasioning a fearful eclipse of that saving and comfortable light which would illuminate our eyes, and direct our steps in the way that leads to eternal happiness. Observe, 2. That in this and all the former judgments, the third part only is mentioned as smitten, which shows that the Lord corrects in measure, and delights more in mercy than in justice, and desires rather the conversion than confusion of sinners, by making the punishments of some instructive warnings unto others. Observe, 3. God's way of dealing with his people in giving warning of future and severe judgments before they come, *I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth;* thus God warneth of approaching judgments before they come, that sinners may repent, and his own people being forewarned, may be forearmed, ere the judgment come upon them: *Præmoniti, præmuniti; Prævisa jacula minus ferunt.* Darts foreseen are dintless.

CHAP. IX.

AND the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth; and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit; 2 And he opened the bottomless pit, and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace: and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. 3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth; and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

Observe here, 1. That those who understand this *vœ* denounced by the fifth angel to denote a temporal judgment, apply it to the Jewish seducer, who headed the turbulent Zealots; he was a ringleader of most hellish villains, and the Zealots under him did all the mischiefs imaginable, marched up to Jerusalem, plundering the city, seizing the temple, and killing the high-priest, with the rest of the priests; but by God's providence it so happened, that this judgment of the Zealots fell not upon the Christians, signified by the trees and green things, but upon the Jews themselves only, because they were not of the faction of Zealots. Observe, 2. That those who understand this *vœ* to intimate a spiritual judgment, apply it, some to the first rising of the Turks and Mahometans, others to the Papacy and Papal clergy: Mr. Mede applies it to the former, king James to the latter. "By locusts and grasshoppers (says he) understand Monks and Friars, who seem to fly a little from the earth, but indeed are gorbellied devourers; in locusts you see little but a mouth and a belly; in Monks you see a mouth to mumble over masses, and a belly to consume; they seized when time was, upon the meadows, the fat and pleasant parts of the land, and like grasshoppers consumed every green, that is, every good thing." Yet observe, 3. The commission and command given to them not to hurt the *trees*; such as are fruit-bearing and fruitful bearing Christians are preserved, and the storm falls upon drossy hypocrites: whence we may remark, that in times of error and seduction, as well as in times of judgment and

calamity, God takes a special care of his faithful ones for their preservation; and has a special regard to the fruit of the trees of righteousness: *It was commanded them that they should not hurt any tree.*

5 And to them (*which had not the seal of God in their foreheads*) it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man. 6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

That is, God would bring such dreadful judgments and calamities upon the wicked world, that men should prefer death before life; and it should be an affliction beyond all other afflictions, that they could not die: to flee death is a great misery, but to have death flee from us, or flee before us, and not be able to find it, is a far greater misery; God can so embitter life by afflictions and sufferings, that those who dread death may yet desire to die; not for any good that they see in death, but only to get rid of the troubles of this life: *In those days men shall seek death, and shall not find it.*

7 And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men. 8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth *were* as the teeth of lions. 9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron: and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. 10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power *was* to hurt men five months. 11 And they had a king over them, *which* is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.

That this is a metaphorical description of a terrible army of cruel men, seems very plain: some understand it of the Jewish Zealots, who appeared as warriors, and were devouring wasters; they looked like men, kind and friendly, and pretending

to be redeemers of the people, saviours of, and benefactors to, their country; but at the same time plundering and carrying away the spoils of their brethren, without any tenderness or compassion. Others apply all this to the papal clergy, *numerous like locusts; well fed, like horses for battle; mighty, for earthly possessions; crowned like petty princes; alluring like women with their hair, and other ornaments, &c.* Others again make the application to belong to the Turks and Saracens, who are represented as having many crowns on their heads, and as moved with wings in regard of the many and vast conquests, says Mr. Mede, which they made in a short time, even in Palestine, Syria, Armenia, Asia the Less, and many others. As to the king, named here *Abaddon* and *Apolylon*, some understand it to be the devil, others Mahomet, others the pope; to whom, to every of whom, the name of a destroyer too fitly belongs, as seeking and endeavouring to destroy men's souls, and by blood and persecution to destroy and lay waste the church of Christ.

12 One woe is past: *and*, behold, there come two woes more hereafter. 13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, 14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. 15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. 16 And the number of the army of the horsemen *were* two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

Note here, 1. From these words, *One woe is past, and two more are to come*, that God has a storehouse of judgments, as well as a treasury of mercy, and when one judgment will not do, he has more to inflict. Note, 2. The golden altar, which is here said to be before God, signifies our Lord Jesus Christ, his purity and excellency, and his appearing continually in the presence of his Father for us, as our intercessor and mediator. Note, 3. That this vast army of horsemen, consisting of two hundred thousand thousand, is expounded generally of Turks and Arabians, who have vast armies beyond all nations, whom God makes the executioner of his vengeance at his pleasure. Note, 4. Whereas

it is said, that the four angels were bound in the great river Euphrates, and, till loosed by God's command, could never hurt nor stir,—it teaches us that the Lord has Satan, and all his instruments, in his own power, to loose them for our sins, and to bind them again upon our repentance: though their malice be infinite, yet their power is bounded; they cannot do all the mischief they would, and they shall not do all they can. Note, 5. That when these destroying angels were loosed, their time of hurting was limited to a year, and a month and a day: showing, that the set and determinate time of the wicked's insolvency is appointed by God to be either shorter or longer, as he thinks fit: yea, they execute nothing but with a divine permission; nay, nothing without a special warrant and commission from God. *I heard a voice saying, Loose the four angels which are bound in the river Euphrates; and they were loosed for an hour, &c.* This is matter of singular consolation to us, that evil angels and wicked men are limited powers; they cannot move, much less hurt, until God loose them: *A voice said, Loose the four angels.*

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses *were* as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. 18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. 19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails; for their tails *were* like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. 20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: 21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

St. John proceeds here in describing this vast army of Turks and Arabians, that with incredible swiftness did overrun and ruin the eastern churches: all these expressions of fire, and brimstone, and smoke, denote that cruel devastation and destruction

which was occasioned by the Turks and Mahometans. Behold here the instruments of Satan, how his own cruel and destructive nature is discovered, how exceedingly he is delighted in the perdition of mankind, having been a murderer from the beginning. In the two last verses St. John declares, 1. What were the sins which produced so great a plague, namely, idolatry and the worshipping the works of their own hands, a sin very odious to God, and for which God suffered the Turks to be so severe a scourge to Christendom; what little reason had the Christians then to call their wars against the Turks the *holy wars*, when idolatry, the cause of it was not repented of? What success could they expect as long as the idolatry of Christians, and their other provoking sins, were so many? Observe farther, What was the end God aimed at by such strong physic, by such terrible judgments as he then brought upon the world? It was to bring them to repentance! but so mad was the antichristian world upon their idols, that they would not be reformed by the judgments they saw upon their brethren. Hence learn, That when God once begins to enter into judgment with a sinful people, he will follow them with a variety and succession of plagues and judgments one upon another, till he has either brought them to himself, or brought them to nothing.

CHAP. X.

AND I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud; and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: 2 And he had in his hand a little book open; and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth.

This angel is concluded to represent our Lord Jesus Christ, the angel of the covenant: he is called a *mighty angel*, in opposition to the mighty enemies of his church, mentioned in the foregoing chapter: he is said to *come down from heaven*, to intimate his signal and seasonable appearing for the relief of his church; *clothed with a cloud*, representing the manner of his coming in the clouds at the final judgment; with a *rainbow on his head*, signifying that covenant of peace which he had made with his church, and his continual mindfulness of that covenant; *his face was as the sun*, to denote that light of comfort and deliverance which he would bring to his church in his

own time; *his feet as pillars*, signifying the steadiness and stability of his purposes and actions, that where he sets his feet, none can remove him; and as *pillars of fire*, denoting his ability to tread down his enemies under him, and also to consume them: this is according to the description of his person, given, chap. i. 15, 16. The emblems and figures by which he is represented here, are the same by which he was described there; consequently he was the same person. Observe next, The account of what he did, *He had a little book in his hand open*, to distinguish it from the former book sealed; a book in which the purpose and decree of God was made known concerning what should happen to the church; a book sealed and shut to us, but obvious and open to Christ. Christ, that lay in the bosom of the Father, reveals his Father's secrets to us, so far as it is needful and necessary for us to know them. *And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth*, to let us know his sovereignty and dominion over the whole world; as well over the turbulent and unquiet, as over the quiet and more peaceable part of it; and also to signify his ability to tread down his enemies, wherever they are; a consideration that administers much comfort and consolation to his church; his dominion is over the earth and sea; none can dispossess him of his power, and none can escape his presence.

3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. 4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

This angel, who represented Christ the Lion of the tribe of Judah, is said to cry like a roaring lion, whose voice is both loud and terrible; this, some conceive, shadowed forth the efficacious and successful preaching of the gospel, and that the seven thunders signified the same: but others apprehend hereby the thundering judgments of God which were shortly to be inflicted on the wicked world; and particularly on Jerusalem by Titus, say some; upon Antichrist and his adherents, say others. The judgments of God are fitly set forth by thunder, because they do not fly at random, but by divine directions; the loudness, the swiftness, the forcibleness of thunder, is known, and the terribleness of God in his doings towards the children of men has

been sufficiently understood. Observe next, St. John's intention to write what these thunders uttered, for the benefit of the church, as conceiving them to be of great concernment to her: but he receives a command from Christ to the contrary; not to do it at present, God foreseeing that the opposers would not hear but despise; therefore these judgments shall be known by experience, and not by words. Others say this inhibition was only temporary, not perpetual; write them not, that is, conceal them for the present, till thou hast those things represented to thee in other types, and till they are nearer their accomplishment; hereafter he might write them, for what God revealed to John was to be showed to his servants, chap. i. 1.

5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, 6 And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, That there should be time no longer: 7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

The angel that represented Christ, is here represented to St. John as *swearing*. Where observe, 1. The ceremony used in swearing, *Lifting up of the hand to heaven*, appealing thereby to God as a witness and a judge. 2. The person sworn by, God; described, (1.) By his eternity. *He lives for ever*, before and after all time. (2.) By his omnipotency, and almighty power in the work of creation, making heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein. An oath is proper to God, and as we are to swear by God, so God is only to be sworn by. Observe, 3. The thing sworn, namely, *That time shall be no more*; that is, that there should be no farther delay of time, for the destruction of Jerusalem, and the obdurate Jews, say some; for the ruin of the Roman empire, for the destruction of Antichrist, say others; the performance of God's word, both in his promises of deliverance to his church, and in the execution of judgment on her enemies, is now at hand. Observe, 4. The promise made, and the assurance here given, namely, *That the mystery of God should be finished*, that is, the deliverance of the church should be completed, and the final confusion of her enemies shall be ac-

complished; which is called a *mystery*, because the world understands it not, nor will they believe the same. As mysteries have their own time to be made manifest in, so, to the comfort of the faithful, and the terror of the wicked, a day was then approaching, in which the happy condition of the afflicted should appear, and the calamitous state of the ungodly be discovered.

8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go, and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. 9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. 10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up: and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. 11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Expositors generally make this *little book* the emblem of the holy scriptures; and the command given by the angel to St. John to eat this book, imports the great duty of studying diligently the holy scriptures, inwardly digesting them, and making them our own by particular application. What we eat is turned into nourishment, and becomes one substance with ourselves; thus the mysteries of the gospel must be eaten by the interpreters of gospel-mysteries. It is not enough that we know divine things, but we must know them divinely; we must have a savoury knowledge of them, and an experimental acquaintance with them. Observe, 2. The effect which the eating of this book had upon St. John, it was in his mouth sweet as honey, in his belly very bitter: that is, the knowledge he had of divine mysteries, was in itself very pleasant, but the knowledge of the persecutions and cruelties which the Christians were to suffer and undergo, was very bitter to his soul. Learn hence, That though communication of light from God, and the revelation of the mind and will of God, be in itself very delightful to his ministers, yet in respect to the said messages contained in his word, it is very burdensome and bitter to them; however, it being the burden of the Lord, they must bear it, they must carry it.

Every good man, much more every gracious minister, has a very high estimation of the word of God, he esteems it as food, he esteems it as necessary food, he esteems it more than his necessary food; but when God sends us to denounce judgments upon sinners, our *belly trembles*, our lips quiver, anguish takes hold upon us; we desire not the woeful day, Lord, thou knowest. Observe lastly, The assurance God gives St. John of farther revelations of his mind unto him, *As thou hast prophesied, so thou shalt prophesy again before many people, and nations, and tongues, and kings*: see here in St. John's person the true end and reason why God calls his ministers, and fits them with gifts, and why they furnish themselves with acquired abilities,—it is to render themselves the more serviceable in his work, that they may speak of his word before kings and not be ashamed.

CHAP. XI.

AND there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

Observe here, 1. The command given by God to St. John to take a survey of his church, his spiritual temple, consisting of living stones, and built upon the chief corner stone, Jesus Christ. God's faithful and true worshippers are only those whom God will have to be measured, and taken notice of as being his part and portion, his tabernacle in which he will dwell. And, blessed be God! in the worst of times they are measurable; even in times of epidemical degeneracy, and universal apostasy, God has a number to stand up for his name, and to bear witness to his truth. Observe, 2. That the temple, the altar, and the worshippers therein, are here all joined together, and the command given is, to measure them together. *Arise, and measure the temple, the altar, and them that worship therein*; intimating, that the true church, and the true worshippers, are ever found together; and by the true worship, and the true worshippers, is the true church ever known; so that if the question be asked, "Where is the true church?" the answer is, where the true altar is; and where the true worship is, there the true church is; that church which will bear God's measuring reed, the scrutiny of the scriptures, and the examination of his holy word; where that worship is found, here the church of God is found.

2 But the court which is without

the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles; and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

Observe here, What St. John is forbidden to measure, and commanded to leave out, as no part of the true church, namely, *The court which is without the temple*; that is, that part of the visible church which is overrun with idolatry and Anti-christian worship, as bad as Gentilism, and accordingly shall be treated as Gentiles, and trodden down under foot as drossy hypocrites: *Measure the temple*, says God, but not *the outward court*. The temple had but few worshippers, the priests only, in comparison of the outward court, where the body of the people was; whence we see that the true church is but *small, very small*, in comparison of the false and Anti-christian church, and consequently multitude can be no right note of the true church. Observe farther, That whereas these Gentiles are said to tread under foot the holy city forty-two months, thereby is signified, that they should kill and persecute the true spouse and church of Christ, (called the holy city, in allusion to the earthly Jerusalem,) during the time of Anti-christ's prevalency; yet here we have the church's ground of comfort and support, that her pressures, and Anti-christ's prevalency, shall be but for a limited time, a short time; *the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months*.

3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophecy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

Observe here, 1. That the church of God during Anti-christ's prevalency, shall not want witnesses or faithful teachers, though removed by persecution into corners. Observe, 2. By mentioning *two* only, we may gather the paucity of faithful teachers during the time of Anti-christ's prevalency; *two* are a number, but the least of numbers; we must not have our eye upon the multitude, or conclude that it is not truth which is not embraced and practised by the most; the train of Christ is not large, nor are his ways thronged as they ought, few comparatively there be that walk in them. As they, whom he calls forth to be eminently his witnesses, are not many, therefore called *two*; so they that received their witness are but few, for the world wonders after the beast. *Quest.* But who and what are these witnesses? *Ans.* The whole succession of faithful ministers, martyrs, and confessors, which Almighty

God from time to time has raised up in his church to be the assertors and maintainers of divine truth, and to bear their testimony for Christ against all heresies, blasphemies, idolatries, and usurpations, in the time of Anti-christ's reign. Observe, 3. The proper work of these witnesses declared, *it is to prophesy*; that is, to instruct the people how to worship God according to his word and will. The manner of their prophesying is said to be in *sackcloth*; that is, in much affliction and with great lamentation, bewailing the pollutions of the church, by the overspreadings of idolatry; and the time of their prophesying is said to be *a thousand two hundred and threescore days*; that is, during the time of Anti-christ's reign, so long the witnesses shall have a mournful time of it; during the whole reign of Antichrist, God will have a true church, a true ministry, and faithful witnesses, whom, though Anti-christ will fight with, yet he shall never prevail against. Observe, 4. How God is pleased to own and bear witness to these his witnesses. 1. He calls them *his, my two witnesses*. 2. He gives them *power to prophesy*; that is, they have their commission and authority from him, and they are enabled, assisted, and succeeded, by him, in the discharge of their testimony; their resolution and courage is from God, who calls them forth to bear their testimony for him. Learn hence, That when God calls any of his to a martyr's fire, he does endure them with a martyr's faith; he furnishes his ministers and faithful servants with noble endowments, answerable to their great employments; God evermore gives much grace, where he tries grace much. As the command of God makes every duty necessary, so the assistance of God makes every duty easy, and the reward of God makes every duty and service gainful and advantageous.

4 These are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. 5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. 6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

Observe here, 1. A double title given by God unto the two witnesses, spoken of in

the former verse; they are styled *olive-trees* and *candlesticks*. As the olive-tree is always green, so the ministry of these witnesses is lively and efficacious; as the olive is a sign of peace, and the oil that drops from the olive an emblem of grace, so the ministry of these witnesses was a ministry both of grace and peace. Again, they are called olive-trees, because they are to minister oil to the candlesticks, which are to hold out light unto others. Here note, That the title of candlesticks given to the churches, chap. i. is here given to the ministers of the church; partly to show the near relation that is between them, and partly to point out the duty that is mutually incumbent upon them; namely, to hold forth the light of truth unto others. And farther, these candlesticks are said to *stand before the God of the earth*, signifying their fidelity in the discharge of their duty, as in the presence of God, before whom they stand. Observe, 2. The efficacy and power of these witnesses' ministry in the certain effects of it. What was said of Elijah and Elisha literally, is applied unto them spiritually. 1. As Elijah brought fire down from heaven, which devoured the enemy, so fire proceeds out of these witnesses' mouth, not by way of imprecation, but by way of denunciation, pronouncing the threatenings and judgments of God against them, continuing in their impenitency. 2. As Elijah had power to shut heaven, so have these witnesses power to do the like during the time of their prophecy; that is, God is provoked for the world's ill treatment of his faithful witnesses to withhold the spiritual rain of the word, and the refreshing doctrine of the gospel, from them. Again, when it is said that these witnesses have power to *turn the waters into blood*, and to smite the earth with all plagues, there is a manifest allusion to Moses and Aaron, who exercised such a power. *Exod. vii.* Accordingly, God being provoked by the indignities offered to his faithful witnesses, permits the pure doctrine of the gospel to be corrupted, and avenges their cause, by bringing judgments on the world, as Moses did upon Egypt, according to the threatenings denounced by them. Whence we may learn, what great credit and esteem the faithful witnesses and ministers of Christ are in with God; what power and prerogative is given to them, far surpassing the power of any mortal prince, even a power to open and shut heaven, to turn waters into blood, and to smite the earth: that is, God doth all these things upon a just occasion, in vindication of them, and in revenge for the injuries done unto them.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. 10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth.

These verses set before us the barbarous usage which the two witnesses should meet with from the antichristian world, for the faithful discharge of their duty; *they shall be slain*, politically and civilly, say some; deposed, silenced, imprisoned, and laid aside as useless and dead. Literally, say others, they shall be put to death for the testimony of Jesus, by bloodshed, fire, and faggot. *They shall overcome them*, that is, in their persons, but not in their cause. See here the Christian church founded in blood, that of Christ its head; watered with blood, that of his ministers and members. God suffers his sometimes to be actually slain, for his own glory, their honour, and the church's good: but mark the time specified when the witnesses were slain; it was *when they had finished their testimony*, and not before then, but not till then. So long as God has special work and service for his witnesses to do in the world, their mighty and cruel enemies cannot touch an hair of their heads, much less can they take away their lives, *till they have finished their testimony*. Observe, 2. Besides the antichristian cruelty, in killing these witnesses, their barbarous inhumanity, in denying them burial, not suffering some to be buried at all, and digging up the bones of others that had been long buried. The place where this was done is called *Sodom and Egypt*, and the great city where our Lord was crucified: which, if literally understood, signifies *Jerusalem*, compared to *Sodom* for the abominable sins of the Gnostics committed in her; and to *Egypt*, for oppression: but if mystically understood, *Rome*, or the Roman empire, is conceived by most Protestants to be here intended by *Egypt* and

Sodom; like *Egypt*, for idolatry, tyranny, spiritual darkness, obstinacy, and obduracy; like *Sodom* for uncleanness, yea, worse than *Sodom*, uncleanness being not only practised but tolerated, yea, allowed publicly, licences being there given to such public houses, and books written in defence of Sodomy at *Rome*, where Christ may be said to be crucified in his members as long as this apostate power holds up. Observe, 3. The great joy and exultation which is here discovered at the slaughter of these witnesses; the antichristian rabble triumph and make merry, rejoice and send gifts, to one another. Lord! how madly do the wicked rejoice at the death of those men that used their utmost endeavours to have saved them! *They that dwell on the earth shall rejoice and make merry*. Observe, 4. The special reason assigned why the members of antichrist's kingdom did thus triumph at the head of the witnesses, and their supposed utter extinction, namely, because the two witnesses *tormented them that dwell on the earth*: that is, by their public preaching, by their private reproving, by their denouncing of God's judgments against them; for not suffering them to go on quietly and undisturbedly in the ways of sin, they grew very uneasy with them, and rejoiced when they thought the world fully rid of them. Lord! how does the preaching of thy word, which comforts and supports thy children, which is sweeter to them than the honey, and more esteemed by them than their necessary food, how does the same word preached torment notorious sinners; and, instead of receiving the message, they rage at the messenger, and triumph and dance with Herod, to see that head cut off whose tongue was so bold to tell them of their faults: *They rejoiced, because these two prophets that tormented them were slain*.

11 And after three days and an half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. 12 And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

The death of the witnesses was described in the foregoing verses, their resurrection is declared in these. This is understood politically by some, that they who were civilly dead, that is, laid aside as useless, were now politically alive; that is, restored to their public work and employment in the church again, God causing princes and

magistrates to own and favour them; and accordingly, by their ascending up into heaven, they understand their re-entering into the church, their re-enjoying their public liberties and gospel privileges, which, in comparison of the low and sack-cloth condition they were in before, was like heaven and earth unto them. And they ascended in a cloud, that is, gloriously, and their enemies beheld them with an envious eye, because of the work in their hands, which it was not in their power to hinder. Others understand this resurrection (in the manner forementioned) to be meant not of the same men, but of men of the same spirit and office, restored to the same work, to the admiration of the good, and consternation of the bad; and that the voice of Christ spake to the slain witnesses, saying, Come up hither, that is, into heaven, to receive the reward of your sufferings and services, and others that succeed you in office shall partake of your spirit, and perfect that work which you began and carried on. Where note, That oftentimes God's faithful witnesses, namely, such magistrates and ministers as have done great things for the church of God, are taken up to heaven before they behold the desired issue, which is left to their successors to see completed.

13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

These words are conceived by interpreters to set forth the great success of the witnesses' ministry after their resurrection; it was accompanied with a mighty earthquake, or a great shaking of the kingdom of antichrist; insomuch that a tenth part of the city fell; that is, many nations and kingdoms under antichrist's tyranny and dominion shook off the yoke, and disowned his jurisdiction, and fell off from him. Observe farther, What this earthquake and fall produced, namely, a twofold effect. 1. *Seven thousand were slain.* 2. Others were affrighted, turned from their sins, and gave glory to God. Behold here the great power of the word of God, and the happy success thereof, to the shaking of antichrist's kingdom, which falls not at once, but by degrees, as it rose. The man of sin is to be consumed with the breath of Christ's mouth at first, which is a gradual death, till at last he be quite abolished by the brightness of his coming. Upon the whole then we may comfortably conclude, that whatever

ground antichrist on the one hand may seem to have gained of late in any place, that yet he is certainly in a deep consummation; nay, far gone in it, and will languish more and more till he draws his last breath: and, on the other hand, whatever clouds may overspread the church of Christ in any place, it will not be long ere they will vanish, and that affairs are moving forward towards the church's highest outward prosperity, and most flourishing condition that she shall ever arrive to on this side heaven, which is to be under the blessed *Millenium*, or thousand years, which began probably with the resurrection of the witnesses at the beginning of the Protestant reformation, by the preaching of Luther. Thus speaks our learned Dr. More, *Myst. Iniq.* p. 477. "I doubt not," says he, "but this vision of the resurrection of the witnesses was a prediction of our Protestant reformation, begun at Spire in Germany, Anno 1529, when several German princes and imperial cities made a solemn protestation against the innovations and usurpations of the church of Rome; from whence came the name of Protestants, which continues to this day. This therefore, says he, [mark his inference] should make our reformation the more sacred, and keep all persons that wish well to our holy religion, from casting any dirt upon our first reformers, whose names ought to be had in honour, and will be so in the church of God throughout all generations."

14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. 15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

An account is here given of the angel's sounding the seventh trumpet, at the beginning of Antichrist's ruin and downfall; St. John heard great acclamations and shoutings in heaven for the victory which Christ by his witnesses had gotten over him, saying, *The kingdoms of this world*, that is, several kingdoms, or main bodies of kingdoms and nations, are now brought in to acknowledge Christ for their sovereign and lawgiver, who did not so before: but whereas formerly they owned another master, namely, antichrist, now they do especially own and acknowledge Christ, by professing to believe in him, and be coming a pure church to him; and he shall

reign for ever and ever. Even under antichrist's reign and tyranny Christ had a kingdom; but he will have a more visible kingdom in the world, and which shall continue without any eclipse by antichrist, or any other, as it suffered before.

16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. 19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

This chapter concludes with a doxology and solemn thanksgiving in heaven, for the victory which Christ obtained over antichrist here on earth, that is, for the begun victory over him. Here observe, 1. The persons, rendering praises, the *four and twenty elders*; all the ministers of the church, say some; the whole church, say others, who are said to sit before God; denoting, 1. That they rest from their labours; they *walked* as pilgrims before, they *sit* now. Would we with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, *sit* down in the kingdom of God in heaven? we must with Abraham walk before God in uprightness here on earth, *Gen. xvii. 5.* 2. It denotes the honour and dignity unto which they were now advanced; as servants they *stood* before, as friends they *sit* now: but upon this great occasion mark their humble gesture, their prostrations and adorations before God, *They fell upon their faces and worshipped.* Observe, 3. The ground and occasion of it; what it is which they thus solemnly bless God for, namely, for Christ's victory over his enemies, for assuming to himself his great power, and universal dominion; and because the *kingdoms of the world were now become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ*: For if there be joy in heaven at

the conversion of one sinner unto Christ, what is there, suppose we, at the conversion of nations and kingdoms unto Christ: behold here the whole host of heaven, the church triumphant in the New Jerusalem, breaking forth into the highest praises for establishing the public exercise of religion in its purity, never more to be driven into corners, as it was twice before; first by Pagans, next by Pagan Christians. Observe, 3. The doxology or thanksgiving itself, *Lord God Almighty, we give thee thanks* for this begun overthrow of Antichrist, which by thy almighty power thou wilt certainly carry on, being always the same, and as able to help thy church as ever, *because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.* As if they had said, in the time of antichrist's full power, when thy church was under a bitter and bloody persecution, thy power seemed to be laid aside, and thou seemedst not to reign, having thy power obscured by his tyranny; but now thou showest thyself to be a ruler over all the world, both king of saints and king of nations. Observe, 4. The indignation and wrath which the friends of antichrist express upon this occasion, *ver. 18. The nations were angry, that is, the idolatrous nations*; they who formerly persecuted, do now fret because they are overcome; they gnash their teeth at the successful progress of the gospel; and because *thy wrath*, that is, the time to execute thy wrath, *is come*, upon all idolaters and false worshippers. And *the time of the dead, that they should be judged and rewarded*: that is, the time is now come when those witnesses, which were civilly dead, and accounted as dead by the world, shall revive again; or, *the time of the dead*, that is, of those that have been slain by Antichrist; the time is come that their blood shall be avenged, and all thy faithful servants and sufferers recompensed and rewarded; particularly *thy prophets*, whose work being greater, such shall their reward be also. And *all that fear thy name, both small and great*; that is, all true believers of a more private capacity, who have cleaved unto Christ's pure and undefiled religion, how obscure soever they have been in the world, none of these shall miss of a recompence, when God's time of rewarding is come; and then *he will destroy them which destroy the earth*; that is, those bloody persecutors, who destroy the inhabitants of the earth by persecutions, or false doctrines. Observe, 5. The great blessing which follows upon the downfall of antichrist, *ver. 19. The temple of God was opened*; alluding to the frequent shutting up of the temple of Jerusalem by idolatrous princes, Ahaz, and others, whom

the ark, in which the law of God lay, was not seen; but Hezekiah and Josiah, those two reforming princes, opened the temple, and restored the true worship of Almighty God. In like manner, during antichrist's reign, the temple of God was shut up, his true worship suppressed: but now, since antichrist's falling, the temple is opened, the ark seen, the pure word of God expounded, and a more than ordinary presence of God (of which the ark was a symbol) found in his church. Well might the church then, upon this happy occasion, triumphantly say, *We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.*

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter St. John has, in a vision, a very clear representation given him of the state and condition of the true church; as also of Satan, her grand adversary and assailant; together with the battle between them; the church's victory over him; and the triumph of the faithful for that victory.

AND there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars;

Observe here, 1. That by the woman we are to understand the Christian church in her militant state, called a woman, in regard of her weakness and dependency; as also in regard of her fruitfulness, she bringing forth many children unto God, which are borne upon her knees. Observe, 2. This woman, the church, is said to appear in heaven, having her original from heaven, her conversation in heaven, her tendency towards heaven, and her dependency upon heaven. Observe, 3. The woman described by her rare perfections, which are three; 1. *Clothed with the sun*, that is, adorned with those graces which Christ the Sun of righteousness has put upon her, and environed with the pure light of the gospel shining about her. 2. *Having the moon under her feet*, that is, the legal worship, according to some; the Christian church outshining now the Jewish state of imperfection, casting off and trampling under the yoke of the Mosaic dispensation. Others by the *moon* understand the world, which is like the moon, full of spots, defiling and polluting, full of changes and alterations, the *fashion of this world passeth away*. 1 Cor. vii. 31. It is never long in one garb; and her having the moon under her feet implies the church's being enabled by Christ to overcome and trample upon all the enjoyments and satis-

factions of the world, and to despise all the affronts and insults of the world. 3. *Upon her head a crown of twelve stars*, that is, holding fast the pure doctrine of the gospel, first preached by the twelve apostles, and after them by succeeding ministers, which is as a crown on the church's head. Where note, That the apostles and all faithful ministers with them, are styled *stars*. As stars they shine before men, by the light of life and doctrine. As stars they shine with a borrowed light, derived from the Sun of righteousness. Again, as *stars* are in continual motion for the good of the universe, so are the ministers of the gospel for the good of the church; as stars, they shine in their own orb, attending the proper duty of their place and station: and as stars shine brightest in the cold winter nights, so do they in the times of affliction and persecution.

2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

The church, typified by a woman, was described in the former verse by her rare perfections, in this verse by her weak and perilous condition; she cries like a woman in travail or delivery, to God in her prayers, to men in her apologies. The plain sense is this, "That the Christian church was possessed with an earnest desire to propagate the Christian religion throughout the world, and she earnestly cried to God to assist here therein, and strove with utmost endeavours to accomplish this her design; and was truly solicitous to see the success of her labours in the lives of her members." Many and sore have been the sick and breeding fits which the church has conflicted with by means of heretics and persecutors, which sometimes gave occasion to fear that she would certainly miscarry; but at last God sent her ease from heaven by the birth of a child, which caused the woman to forget all her sorrows; and the prayer of faith was then in the greatest activity, when the woman was found to be in the greatest extremity.

3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth:—

The church was described before; her arch-enemy, the devil, is described now: he is called a *dragon* for his subtilty, a *great dragon* for his power, a *red dragon* for his

fiery cruelty. His *seven heads* denote his manifold subtilities, and mischievous contrivances, his devices and wicked imaginations against the church; his *ten horns* denote his vast power and great strength, both in himself and his members; also the number and power of his agents, who serve as *horns* to push and hurt the church. His *seven crowns* upon his head denote his regal power, which he holds by usurpation, and his many victories and conquests which he obtains in the world, yet over none but those who are willingly overcome by him. The whole of the description represents Satan as a powerful, subtle, cruel, victorious adversary. All which properties he discovers in the assault he makes upon the ministers of the church, called the *stars of heaven*, which he endeavours to cast down to the earth; that is, to hinder their shining in the firmament of the church. Hence learn, 1. What a mighty enemy the church has, fierce and fiery, red and bloody, full of craft and cruelty, of power and policy; and how deplorable her condition would be, if the Lord himself was not on her side. Learn, 2. Who is prime author of all that cruelty and bloodshed against the church of God, even the *red dragon* with its heads and horns, his ministers and agents: the greatest monarchs upon earth, if they gore and hurt the church, are the *base heads and horns* of this monstrous dragon.

—And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three-score days.

That is, "As Herod watched to destroy Christ as soon as he was born, *Matt. ii.* so while the church was endeavouring to propagate Christianity and make converts to Christ, the dragon watched, intending to devour them." The devil's great design is to crush every good thing in the beginning, to nip grace in the bud, to kill the infant church in the cradle; he is therefore said to *stand before the woman*, to prevent all possibility of her child's escape. Behold his bloody cruelty! but though he stood before her, he had no power to hurt or touch either, mother or child: behold his powerful re-

straint! Observe farther, The child's birth, preservation, and preferment. 1. Its birth, she brought forth a *child*, not *children*: to show the paucity of the church's members, and also their unity, they are all but one man child, make up all but one body, and the dragon's purpose was to devour all in one, and all at once. 2. Its preservation, the child is *caught up to God, and to his throne*; that is, heaven took it immediately into its care and protection, out of the dragon's reach, to his shameful disappointment. 3. Its preferment, it was to *rule all nations with a rod of iron*; that is, with such severity, mixed with lenity, as was needful; the church shall prevail against all opposers. Observe lastly, After the woman's delivery, her flight into the wilderness is set down, and her continuance for a long time, together with God's protection over her; a plain allusion to Elijah's flying into the wilderness from the rage of idolatrous and bloody Jezebel, and God's feeding him extraordinarily at the brook of Cherith. From the woman's that is, the church's flying into the wilderness for a while, we learn, That the visibility of the church is not always conspicuous, to her enemies especially. 2. That it is sometimes lawful to fly in time of hot and bitter persecution: *the woman fled into the wilderness.* 3. In that the woman had a place, and food prepared for her, we learn God's provident care for his church in the day and hour of her greatest extremities; when she larks and hides herself in obscurity. During the time of antichrist's reign, God will take care that some shall feed her with wholesome food, the doctrine of the gospel, that sincere milk of the word, to the intent that she may grow thereby.

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon: and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

By *Michael and his angels*, understand Christ, whose the angels are, and so much the name imports, *Michael*, that is, *who like God*; Christ is the likeness of his Father, his essential likeness. St. John in a vision beholds *Michael* and his angels combating with the dragon and his angels; yea, vanquishing and overcoming them. This may

comfort the church under all her conflicts, that at length her *Michael* will finally prevail, and she in him. Our Lord Jesus Christ, by the powerful preaching of the gospel, has weakened the kingdom of sin, Satan, and antichrist. His angels are his ministers, martyrs, and confessors; those particularly of the first ages, who, by their cries to God, and apologies to their rulers, by their holy lives, and patient deaths, did overcome their enemies. And thus *Michael* and his angels, Christ and his ministers, fought against the dragon and his angels, against Satan and his cruel instruments, who were so far from prevailing, that they lost ground continually; the Christians overcame them by their faith and patience. And the great dragon was cast down, he was by the preaching of the gospel deposed from being worshipped as a god, and his power was taken away. From the whole note, 1. That though *Michael*, Christ alone, be able to overcome the dragon and all his angelic powers, yet for his own greater honour, and their greater confusion, he overcomes him and them by his ministers and faithful servants. Note, 2. If *Michael* our prince be with us, Christ Jesus, the captain of our salvation, our leader, then, though the combat may be sharp, yet the victory is sure; for if he be for us, who can (successfully) be against us? Note, 3. That Satan and his angels were cast out together; for of the devil and his instruments the lot shall be alike; they sin together, and they shall suffer together, and shall never be parted. Lord, how dreadful will an imprisonment with devils and damned spirits be to eternal ages! To lie for ever with Satan in that mysterious fire of hell, whose strange property it is always to torture, but never to kill; or always to kill, but never to consume. The dragon was not only cast out of heaven with his angels, but both were cast down into hell, even into that lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death. 12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea!

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for the devil is come down unto you! having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

After *Michael* and his angels', Christ and his followers', victory over the dragon and his angels, over Satan and his instruments, here follows a solemn thanksgiving for the devil's downfall: the saints in heaven join with believers on earth in this song of confidence and triumph: when they speak of God, they say our God: and when they speak of the church below, they say our brethren: behold a sweet communion between the church militant and the church triumphant; indeed they constitute and make up but one church, one family, one household: the whole family of heaven and earth is but one. Observe farther, Another name here given to Satan, *the accuser of the brethren*; he accuses them continually before God, and by his instruments before men; the primitive Christians were accused by their enemies to the magistrates as guilty of the most villainous practices in their religious assemblies: and behold the assiduity of Satan in accusing the saints day and night; but, blessed be God, as Satan is a continual accuser, Christ is a continual mediator. Observe again, How the saints overcame Satan. 1. By the blood of the Lamb; that is, by faith in his blood. 2. By the word of their testimony; that is, by their preaching, professing, and practising the word of God. 3. By their sufferings and martyrdom, they loved not their lives unto the death: that is, they loved not their lives so well but that they were willing to expose them to death, rather than renounce the cause of Christ, and desert their holy profession. Observe lastly, After this great exultation and joy in heaven for the devil's downfall, here is a denunciation of woe to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea, upon that account; that is, to all earthly sensual men, whether they inhabit the continent, or any island in the sea; because the devil is come down full of rage, knowing that his time is short to execute his malice in. Learn hence, 1. Who is the author of wrath, and malice, and revenge; and whose children they are that partake of that spirit and temper: the devil has great wrath; that is his character, and the very soul and spirit of the apostate nature. Learn, 2. That something good may be learned from the evil one; Satan is very busy, doubly diligent, because his time is short; so should we be; our grave and coffin is at hand, our glass has but a little sand; since but a few leaves are remaining in the book of our lives unfilled up, it concerns us to write

the closer, and the faster too: as Satan's time for mischief is short, so is our time for doing good.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child. 14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

Observe here, The incessant and restless malice of Satan and his instruments against the church; neither his fore-mentioned disappointment, his present foil and downfall, nor his fear of future destruction, could move him to desist: but, having attempted to destroy the church with the fire of persecution before, he endeavours to drown it with a flood of errors now. *Diabolus mutat consilium, non deponit malitiam*; the devil sometimes changes his methods in doing mischief, but never lays down his malice: he persecutes the woman, the church of Christ, after another manner, namely, by a flood of errors and heresies. Observe, 2. The care that God took for his church's preservation from this fatal mischief also: to the woman were given the wings of a great eagle, for flight into the wilderness; that is, all means and ways of evasion, which God out of his care for his church provides for her safety and protection in the time of trouble: the church's flight in time of persecution is by no means to be censured or condemned, especially when God by his providence provides her wings, that is, gives her opportunity so to do. Observe, 3. The place she flies into for safety, namely the wilderness, called her place, because prepared by God for her safety; here she is nourished, that is, hath spiritual food provided for her by God, and a number of faithful ministers are qualified for the feeding of her; for a time, and times, and half a time, that is, for a certain time determined by God, but altogether unknown to us; thus when the church meets with new distresses, God provides for her new deliverances.

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood, 16 And the earth helped the woman; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. 17 And the dragon

was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Two things are here observable: a new danger, ver. 15. a renewed succour, ver. 16. Observe, 1. A new danger; this is set forth, 1. By the author of it, the serpent; the former attempt against the church was managed by the wrathful dragon, this is contrived by the subtle serpent: open cruelty is more dreadful, but subtle policy is more dangerous: the cunning devil is a more mischievous enemy to the church of Christ than the raging devil; subtle Julian did the church more mischief than bloody Nero or Dioclesian. Learn hence, That what mischief Satan cannot effect by open cruelty, he will attempt against the church by subtle policy; when he fails as a dragon, he will try what he can do as a serpent. 2. Observe the matter as well as the author of this danger: *The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood*, that is, a flood of errors, heresies, false doctrines, and corrupt opinions, cast out of the mouth of the corrupting seducers, endangering the very essence and being of the church of Christ, particularly the Arian heresy, which prodigiously overspread the world in its time. Heresy may fitly be compared to a flood; it is a corrupting and defiling flood, it is a swelling and increasing flood, it is a drowning and overwhelming flood. Learn hence, That the serpent's flood of errors and false doctrines, is the worst and chiefest of the church's dangers. *The serpent cast out a flood to carry away the woman*. Observe, 3. The church's seasonable relief and succour: *The earth helped the woman by opening her mouth, and swallowing up the flood*, which the dragon cast out of his mouth; by the earth some understand earthly ones, wicked men, who are said to help the woman, not intentionally, but eventually, by their greedy swallowing down those errors which come out of the dragon's mouth, hearkening to his lies, and believing his errors for truth's; others by the earth understand the kings and rulers of the earth, helping the woman, by calling synods and councils to stem the tide, to dam this flood, and to condemn these errors and heresies, which by their overflowing endangered the church's ruin: the devil raised four abominable errors presently after the church had obtained peace, and there was a great concurrence of magistrates and ministers in confuting, censuring, and condemning the same, in and by their councils and

CHAP. XIII.

synods. 1. The heresy of Arius, who denied the divinity of Christ, this was condemned by the council of Nice, called by Constantine. 2. The heresy of Macedonius, who denied the personality of the Holy Ghost, condemned by a council at Constantinople, called by Theodosius the First. 3. The heresy of Nestorius, who asserted that Christ had two persons, as well as two natures, condemned by a council at Ephesus, called by Theodosius the Second. 4. The heresy of Eutyches, who confounded Christ's natures, making him to have but one nature, as well as to be but one person; this was condemned by the council of Chalcedon: thus the earth helped the woman; these four councils tended very much to the maintaining of the truth, and preserving the church from that flood of error and heresy which the dragon cast out of his mouth. Observe lastly, The dragon's rage, verse 17. *He was wroth with the woman, and made war with the remnant of her seed*, that is, he was greatly enraged because the woman was extraordinarily helped, and his designs wonderfully disappointed: and when he saw he could not ruin the whole church, he resolves to attack some particular members of it, even such as keep the *commandments of God, and had the testimony of Christ*; that is, those who kept close to the scriptures, which contain the doctrine of faith, and testify that Christ is the only Saviour of the world. Now from the dragon's making war with the remnant of the woman's seed, we learn how insatiable the blood-thirstiness of Satan and his instruments is, who when they had killed the witnesses before, and many others, yet can they not rest until they have killed this little remnant, and made themselves drunk with the blood of the saints; and never let Protestants expect any other or any better usage at the hands of Romanists, with whom this is a certain principle, that heretics in a nation are to be extirpated, root and branch, where it may safely be done; that is, when they are not too numerous, and the loss of one of our lives may not cost two of their own. If any say that Papists are now become better natured, by being under the restraint of our laws, I wish them that they may never be tempted out of their humanity by advantages of power; and as Almighty God has once more delivered the neck of this nation from the pinchings of the Anti-christian yoke, may our sins never provoke him more to deliver us into the hands of those men, whose tender mercies are cruel. Amen.

In the visions of this and the following chapter, are represented to St. John the great straits which such Christians as were the sincere worshippers of the true God should be reduced to. On the one hand, they are threatened with damnation if they do worship the beast, chap. xvi. 9, 10. On the other hand they are threatened with death if they do not worship it, chap. xiii. 15. So that whenever this should happen, it would be a time of great trial to faithful Christians, and therefore it is added, ver. 12. Here is the patience of the saints. This is represented in St. John's vision, as the last and extremest persecution of the true worshippers of God, and which shall precede the final downfall of Babylon. And when this should happen, then he tells us, that the patience of the saints would be tried to purpose, and it would then be seen who are faithful to God, and constant to his truth: the particulars hereof follow.

AND I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

Observe here, 1. The place where St. John had the vision related in this chapter; he apprehends himself to stand on the *sea-shore*, a place fit for the sight he was to see, namely, *a beast rising out of the sea*. Where note, That it is usual in the prophets, Daniel especially, to set out temporal monarchies oppressing the church, by great beasts. Where we learn, what a base and vile, what a low and mean, esteem God has of the mightiest enemies of his church and people; let the world admire them as gods, if they abuse their power God calls them beasts; and as such, in his own time, they shall be destroyed; I saw a beast rise up out of the sea. Observe, 2. The monstrous description of that beast which St. John saw, it had *seven heads*, denoting, some say, the seven hills upon which Rome stands; or the seven sorts of government successively in the Roman state, say others; and *ten horns*, that is, ten kings under Rome, and confederate with her. Where note, That all such kings, be they ever so mighty or many, which persecute sincere Christianity, are vile in the esteem of God, accounted no better than the horns of a bloody beast, which Almighty God will either blunt or break. And upon the *horns ten crowns*, which crowns they hold of God, who is the King of kings. Sovereignty is from heaven, however men come by it, or however they abuse it; which shows the horrid ingratitude of those princes, who having received their power from God, do improve it against him, and turn it upon him by whom they

reign. *And upon his heads the name of blasphemy*; those that apply this description of the beast to Rome Pagan, understand hereby their paganish idol-worship in general; and their deifying of the Roman emperors in particular. Others, as most Protestants, who apply it to Rome Papal, by this name of *blasphemy*, understand those blasphemous titles which are given to the Pope, as "Lord God, the universal Head, the Husband of the church, the Light which came into the world," &c. which are the incommunicable attributes of Christ; and by flatterers and admirers frequently given to the Papal Antichrist, *upon whose head is the name of blasphemy*.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

St. John here proceeds in giving a farther description of this monstrous beast; it was in appearance like a *leopard*, spotted with divers kinds of idolatry, with variety of idol gods; with *feet* like a *bear*, denoting its strength and fierceness; its mouth like a *lion*, that is, cruel and ravenous. Next an account is given from whom this beast receives its power and authority; the *dragon*, that is, the devil, by God's permission, gave unto this beast power and great authority, to deceive by strong delusions, and hurt the soul, as also to kill and destroy the body. Note here, That when the dragon is said to give the beast his throne and power, his seat and great authority, we must not understand it as by right, for all power is from God, but as by usurpation, belonging to him. That authority, which is claimed to depose kings, to dispose of kingdoms, to dispense with the laws of God, all this is from the dragon, and in no wise from God. *The dragon gave the beast his power, his seat, and great authority*.

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

Here St. John farther declares what he saw concerning this beast; namely, 1. That *one of its heads was wounded*; by which head many understand the fall of the ancient imperial power, the decay of its wonted glory, and that ample jurisdiction which Rome heretofore had under the Pagan emperors: and by the wounding of this head, they understand the abolishing of Paganism and idolatry, and putting a

stop to persecution, by the Christian emperors. 2. It is asserted, *That his deadly wound was healed*; namely, when idolatry, the same for substance with the Pagan and old Heathenish idolatry, but in a new dress, was gradually restored by the Papal powers. 3. Here is the effect of this healing, *all the earth wondered after the beast*, that is, followed him in blind devotion. Where, 1. Observe, Who the admirers of the beast are, the earth, the men of the world: no wonder to see them seduced! 2. This admiration is general, *the whole earth wondered* after the beast; how false is it then, that *multitude* is a note of the true church! Behold the several instances of the world's wondering after the beast at Rome; they receive their doctrine and worship from him, they make all their appeals to him, all church officers receive their ordination from him, and are installed by him.

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? 5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies: and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

From admiration in the former verse, they proceed to adoration in this, they worship both the dragon and the beast, that is, they did worship idols, which are often in scripture called devils; like the Gentiles of old, who are said by St. Paul to sacrifice to devils, and not unto God, 1 Cor. x. 20. Behold here a vast difference between God's judgment and the opinion of the seduced world. They think the worship they give to a creature is given to God; but God accounts it as given to the devil, who is the author of all idolatry. Note next, That as the seduced world worshipped the beast, so do they extol his earthly grandeur and surpassing power, saying, *Who is like unto the beast! who is able to make war with him? Who can resist his power and greatness? The greatest princes are not able to withstand him. See how pomp and worldly grandeur dazzles the eyes of its admirers. Note farther, That a mouth was given this beast to speak, that is, a power by the devil's instigation and God's permission, to utter blasphemies against the Most High.* 1. The blasphemous mouth of the beast is

opened against the name of God, that is, against the word of God, by which God makes himself known, as a man is known by his name. Now the word of God is blasphemed by the *beast* and his worshippers, when it is charged with obscurity, with imperfection, called a *dead letter*, and a *nose of wax*, &c. The Spirit of God is blasphemed, when his divinely inspired writings are thus vilified and undervalued. 2. This blasphemous mouth is opened not only against God's name, but against his tabernacle, the place of his instituted worship; meaning by his tabernacle, the true church, wherein God is worshipped according to his word. God accounts himself blasphemed when his true worshippers are called *Heretics*, *Schismatics*, and in a way of scorn *Hugonots*, and the *Synagogue of Satan*. 3. They blaspheme them that *dwell in heaven*, by which some understand the holy martyrs now in heaven, whom they frequently called damned heretics, blackening their names, and blasting their reputations; others understand it of some saints in heaven, whom they pretend to honour, as the Virgin Mary, &c. They blaspheme them, namely, by speaking of them, and praying to them *blasphemously*, as when they bid the Holy Virgin, "in the right of a mother, command her Son." Hence observe, That when we give that honour and worship to saints and angels, which is only due to God, it is an idolatrous and impious blaspheming of them that dwell in heaven; were the Virgin Mary sensible in heaven of that idolatrous adoration which is given her here on earth, with what indignation and disdain would she look down upon this sacrilegious violence offered to her only Son, in robbing him of that divine honour which is peculiarly due to his divine nature! for religious adoration is peculiar to a deity.

7 And it was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Observe here, 1. A war proclaimed; the *beast* makes war upon the saints, by bloodshed and persecution, and by the force of those weapons overcomes them; that is, to outward appearance, and in the opinion of the world, they seem to be totally overcome, because visibly slain: but really do the saints overcome him, by their patience

and constancy under sufferings; and by rejecting his cursed idolatry, and adhering to the truth. Observe, 2. The large extent of the *beast's* power that was given him, namely, *over all kindreds, tongues, and nations*. This must not be understood of individual persons, nor universally of all nations, but of the nations belonging to the Roman empire: whole nations were carried away with his idolatry, though not all of every nation. Christ's flock is a little flock, compared with antichrist's herd: how wrong a note then is multitude of the right church! Observe, 3. That as the power of the *beast* is universal, so is the worship also: *All that dwell on the earth shall worship him*, that is, the generality of the Roman empire shall obey and honour him, and comply with him in his idolatry; few comparatively refusing it. Yet, 4. We have a number excepted, *whose names are written in the book of life*. Blessed be God for this comfortable restriction: all are not worshippers of the *beast*. Christ has his number of faithful ones, who are not defiled by antichrist's pollutions; a number whose conversations are in heaven, and whose names are written there, in the book of life, called the book of the Lamb; because it is by him, and by the merit of his blood, that we obtain eternal life. Observe, lastly, The title here given to our Lord Jesus Christ, he is styled the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, and that in several respects: 1. In the purpose and decree of God. 2. In the promise of God made from the beginning, *Gen. iii. 15*. 3. In respect of the types, shadows, and sacrifices, whereby his death was prefigured and represented; Christ was slain typically in those sacrifices which Adam and Abel offered up unto God daily. 4. In respect of the virtue and efficacy of his death, which was effectual to all that truly believe in him, from the first promise made of him. The merits of Christ's death have saved all that have been saved from the foundation of the world. Behold here, The tender care of God in providing for our salvation before we were, yea, before the world was; and observe also, that the saints of God, in all ages, have been saved the same way, and by the same mean, namely, by faith in the death of Christ, which has extended itself to all true believers from the beginning of the world; and the efficacy of it will reach to all such, even to the end of the world; the virtue of the sacrifice is as fresh as the first moment it was slain, the death of Christ is of eternal efficacy.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear. 10 He that leadeth into cap.

tivity, shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Observe here, 1. That this acclamation, *If any man have an ear, let him hear*, is added in scripture when something went before, which required a very diligent attention and close application of mind: *If any man have an ear*, that is, a spiritual understanding to discern the meaning of what has been foretold, let him ponder and consider what is here revealed concerning this beast, and take heed that he be not found amongst the number of the worshippers of it. Observe, 2. The consolation here given to the saints, from the consideration of God's just retribution to his and their enemies, *He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity*; that is, the beast, who has brought many of the saints into captivity, shall himself at length be taken captive, and thrown into that lake of fire and brimstone, spoken of chap. xix. 20. With what measure antichrist metes to others, it shall be measured to him again: God has as many ways to hurt his church's enemies, as they have to hurt his people; if they lead into captivity, so can he; if they kill with the sword, so will he. Observe, 3. The end and design of God in suffering antichrist's rage to break forth against the church: it is for the trial of his church's faith and patience, *Here is the patience and faith of the saints*. Where note, 1. That none can stand under, or bear up under, sufferings like saints. 2. That under great sufferings, saints themselves will have great occasion for the exercise of faith and patience. 3. That the faith and patience of the saints will be made very conspicuous by great and sharp sufferings. 4. That faith and patience must accompany each other in suffering times. Patience is the soul's shoulder, to bear what is afflictive at present; faith is the Christian's eye, to discover a glorious deliverance to come: where no patience is, it is a token of no faith; and where no faith is, there will appear great impatience. Behold then the faith and patience of the saints.

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. 12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them who dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13 And he doeth great

wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

Here St. John enters upon the description of a second beast, very different from the former, yet not succeeding the former, but appearing during his continuance; and this beast (whoever he is) we find sundry ways here described, namely, 1. By his original he *ascended out of the earth*, ver. 11. which denotes his rise from a small beginning to a mighty height, as those things which from small seeds grow out of the earth to be tall trees. Thus has one arisen from being *Episcopus urbis*, to be *Episcopus orbis*. 2. He is said to have *two horns*, whereas the former beast had *ten*, ver. 1. which signifies ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire, after its dissolution, should be divided. Accordingly, by the two horns here, in all reason may be understood two of those kingdoms of which this beast (whoever he be) shall be possessed. 3. He is said to look like a *lamb*, but to speak like a *dragon*; that is, to pretend to great meekness, and make a show of much lenity and mildness in his proceedings, but should really be very cruel: pretending to do all without violence, but doing indeed all by force, assisted by his armed dragons, and booted apostles, with javelins in their hands. 4. It is affirmed, ver. 12. that he shall arise during the continuance of the first beast, and engage in his cause assuming to himself as great, or a greater, power than any emperors did before him, causing the *earth*, that is, all earthly-minded men who are subject to him, to worship the first beast, that is, to yield as great reverence and obedience to his decrees for establishing idolatry, as ever the people did under the Pagan emperors. 5. He is remarkable for working wonders, and particularly for causing fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men; that is, he seemeth to the deluded multitude to do as great miracles as Elias did, who brought down fire from heaven to confirm the religion he professed: in like manner the beast here works wonders seemingly great, lying wonders, false miracles, such as false prophets may work, and have wrought for confirming their false doctrines: accordingly we find this beast

here called the *false prophet* elsewhere, chap. xvi. 8, 9. He requires the inhabitants of the earth to make an image to the beast, that is, he persuades them, now professing Christianity, to introduce and bring in such a kind of idolatry, that the old heathenish idolatry may seem to revive again. Here note, That the idolatry of the Church of Rome is a living image of the old heathenish idolatry; this is but the image of that, that was performed to heathen deities, this to departed saints. Popery, says the learned Dr. More, is such a Christianity, as in all points answers the model of the old execrable heathenism, with which the Gentiles were enamoured then, as are the Papists now: thus the wounded and dead image of Pagan idolatry revived, and lives again in Papal idolatry. Good God! that any persons professing to know and worship the blessed Jesus should thus dishonour him, by intermixing the old heathenish superstitions, or something worse, with his holy institutions.

15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. 16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

St. John proceeds here to give a farther character and description of the beast, which he had begun to describe, ver. 11. And, 1. His bloody cruelty is set forth, ver. 15. *He causeth them to be killed that would not worship the image of the beast.* Where mark, It is not said that he killed them himself, nor challenging directly the power of life and death to himself; but he causeth them to be killed, namely, by the secular power, by the kings and princes, who are the horns of the beast, and who give their power and strength to the beast, and war against the Lamb. Again, 2. After his cruelty follows his compulsion; he causes all sorts of men, high and low, bond and free, to receive a mark in their right hand, and in their forehead, in allusion to an ancient

custom, which was to mark servants and soldiers on the arm by which it was known what master or captain they belonged to; in like manner the beast here is said to have a mark for those that are his, which mark seems probably to have been an open owning of him, an active engagement for him, a professed subjection to him. 3. The beast is here said to interdict and forbid all trade and commerce with those that had not his mark, verse 17. *He causeth that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark of the beast.* Several bulls and decrees have been sent forth from Rome, commanding that no traffic or commerce be had with any heretic in buying or selling, but only with those that profess themselves members of the Romish church. 4. It is added, that the *Number of the beast is six hundred sixty-six*, that is, that the numeral letters of a certain word or name, being computed, should amount to that number. I shall close this chapter with the words of a great man, Archbishop Tillotson, on *Rev. xiv. 13*, page 328. "Unto whom all the fore-mentioned characters of the beast do agree, and especially the number of his name, I shall not presume to conjecture, much less positively to determine, because it is said to require a particular wisdom and understanding to find it out: *Here is wisdom, let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast.* However, the event will discover it." And again, on *St. Luke ix. 55*, he thus speaks; "It is believed by many, and not without cause, that the Pope and his faction are the antichristian beast; I will say no more than I know in this matter: I am not certain that it is he that is particularly designed in scripture by the name; but however that be, I challenge antichrist himself, whoever he is, and whenever he comes, to do worse and wicked things than he has done: verily it almost looks uncharitably barely to relate what these men have not blushed to act."

CHAP. XIV.

The design and scope of this chapter is threefold: First to show that during the reign of the beast, mentioned in the foregoing chapter, Christ had a church, a number of virgins, of pure and unspotted souls, who did zealously and sincerely worship him. Secondly, that the light of the gospel, which had been so long suppressed, should at length break forth gloriously, in the faithful preaching of it, to the downfall of Babylon, and the comfort of Zion, the church of God. Thirdly, The chapter acquaints us with the happy condition of such as die in the Lord; and particularly of the martyrs which die for the Lord; and concludes with an account of the dreadful punishments which God would inflict upon their persecutors.

AND I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him

an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

This verse represents to us a fresh vision which St. John had, in which several things are very observable, as, 1. What and whom St. John saw, a *Lamb*, by whom Christ is to be understood. 2. The posture which this Lamb was found in, *he stood*, showing thereby his readiness to deliver his church, and to do every thing that is needful for her. 3. The place where he stood on, *Mount Sion*, that is, in the midst of the church. Christ ever has been, is, and will be, present with his church, even to the end, although his presence with her is not always sensibly perceived; his care is mysteriously exercised; he is then taking most care of her when he seems to take least, nay, when the men of the world think he takes none at all. Observe, 4. His company and attendants, and they are described two ways, 1. By their number, to wit, an hundred forty and four thousand, whereby the collective body of the whole church is to be understood; and intimates to us, that in the worst of times, even when apostasy and persecution do most universally prevail, Christ never wants a church, and is not without a number of true worshippers. 2. They are described by their badge or mark, having their *Father's name written in their foreheads*; in opposition to the mark of the beast mentioned in the foregoing chapter, and in allusion to a custom amongst men, who put their mark or names upon their goods, especially upon such as are very precious, as silver or gold vessels, and the like; so that the mark of the Father's name upon the forehead denotes both the precious esteem which God has of his people, and also intimates their open profession and owning of him for their Lord and Master, and their faithful adherence to his worship. Learn hence, That the sincere worship of God, with the open and avowed profession of his holy and undefiled religion, accompanied with a suitable conversation, is a better mark and note of the true church than multitudes and numbers, which are a note of the antichristian synagogue: the world wonders after the beast, when Mount Sion here affords only an hundred forty-four thousand, which had the Father's name written on their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping

with their harps: 3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

St. John here describes the true worshippers of Christ in the midst of antichristian idolatry; where we have, 1. The acceptable worship they perform, prayer and praise, an heavenly exercise, which, like *thunder*, and the *voice of many waters*, sounds loud in the ears of God, and is certainly heard by him, and is melodious like the *harp*, and therefore as acceptable to him as the sweetest music is to us. 2. The persons described who perform this acceptable worship, such as were *redeemed from the earth*; where the *earth* is put for earthly-minded men, the false church; the meaning is, that God has fetched this small number of true worshippers, the hundred forty-four thousand, from among the false worshippers and impure ones, he hath rescued them from the world of idolaters, and from the superstitious multitude. 3. The persons described before whom this worship is performed, *Before the throne, and before the four beasts and elders*,—*before the throne*, to show the reverence and sincerity wherewith they performed the same, as in the sight of the great and glorious God; *and before the beasts and elders*, that is, the whole congregation of the saints, according to that of the Psalmist, *Psal. lxxxix. 7. God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him.*

4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

St. John proceeds here in describing the true worshippers of God, which would not comply with antichristian idolatry: 1. He styles them *virgins*, thereby intimating that they are the chaste spouse of Christ, and the true church, who worship God alone with religious worship; *and they have not defiled themselves with women*, that is, spiritually committed whoredom, they have not been inveigled with the whore to commit spiritual fornication. Where note, That idolatry is a filthy sin, it is as odious to God as whoredom and uncleanness, and an

idolatrous church is a filthy whore, unworthy to claim the title of a mother, unless it be the mother of fornications. 2. They are said to *follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes*; this is spoken in opposition to those who *followed the beast*, and denotes their imitation of Christ's example, and their firm adherence to the purity of his doctrine and worship, although it expose them to hazard and danger. 3. They are called the *first-fruits unto God, and the Lamb*, which denotes their paucity, like a few sheaves in comparison of the whole harvest; their sanctity, the first-fruits were holy to the Lord, and were his peculiar portion; also their safety and security, as the first-fruits were God's portion, so it was both sacrilegious and unsafe to rob God of his portion. By calling them the first-fruits which were holy to the Lord, we see the special interest and propriety that God has in his faithful servants and true worshippers beyond all others; they are his peculiar portion, his inheritance, his treasure, which he will ever take care of, and be concerned for.

5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Here St. John closes the description of the fore-mentioned followers of the Lamb, 1. With the character of their integrity; like the Lamb, no guile is found in their mouth, as there was none in his, 1 Pet. ii. 22. they were free from that hypocrisy which was found amongst anti-christ's followers, who profess to worship God, but adore their idols; sincerity and uprightness of heart towards God and man was found with them. 2. They are said to be without fault before God; which may be understood comparatively; they have no such faults as antichrist's followers are guilty of; they worship God aright, and are approved by him: or, if absolutely, we must understand it of their glorification in heaven, where all the saints are without spot, and blameless *before the throne of God*, perfectly like unto God and the Lamb, as well in purity as in immortality.

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and

earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

Here St. John has another vision of an angel flying in the midst of heaven with great swiftness, which interpreters apprehend to signify the faithful minister's zeal and diligence in preaching the glad tidings of the gospel to a lost world. Where note, 1. The title given to the gospel of Christ, it is called the *everlasting gospel*: so it is, partly in regard of its author the everlasting God, partly because it promises and offers everlasting life; but chiefly because it was preached from the beginning of the world, and shall continue to the end of the world, and never be abrogated, as the legal administration was. Note, 2. The universality of that grace and salvation which in and by the gospel is held forth and tendered even unto all nations, tongues, kindreds, and people; so that none are debarred, but those who by impenitency and unbelief do wilfully and finally debar themselves. Note, 3. That God's sending the everlasting gospel to be preached, is here called *the hour of his judgment*; the preaching the gospel is the hour of mercy to some, but wrath and judgment to others, even to all refusers and contemners; and accordingly all are warned to fear God, and give glory to him, and, instead of worshipping idols and images, to worship the true God according to his will revealed in his word.

8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Here we have the second angel's proclamation, denouncing the fall of *Babylon*, whose fall is in the prophecy threatened, and in the threatening ingeminated, *Babylon is fallen, is fallen*; to show the certainty of her downfall. And it is observable how this comes in immediately after the restoring of the gospel, mentioned in the foregoing verses, *I saw an angel fly, having the everlasting gospel to preach*, ver. 6. *And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen*, ver. 8. Whence learn, That it is the zealous and faithful preaching of the gospel which is the ruin of antichrist, and the means of his downfall and destruction: this is the breath of the Lord's mouth, by which he is consumed: *Babylon is fallen, is fallen*. *Quest.* What is here meant by *Babylon*? *Ans.* All agree that literal *Babylon* is not here meant, which was the chief city of Chaldaea, but spoken figuratively;

and it is generally agreed that by *Babylon* is Rome here intended: some will have it Rome Pagan, under the heathen emperors, others Rome Papal, under the antichristian tyranny, and that she is paralleled with *Babylon* for her idolatry and cruelty, yea, far exceeding her in both, for in her is found the blood of the prophets, of the saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth, Rev. xviii. 24. Observe next, Her ruin declared in the present tense, *is fallen*; as if already accomplished; and ingeminated, *is fallen, is fallen*; which repetition denotes both the certainty of her fall, and the joy which the church should express upon that occasion: though *Babylon* be never so great, yet she shall fall, she shall assuredly fall; and it is the church's duty to pray, that as it is in the prophecy, so it may be in the history, that *Babylon is fallen*, and to express the highest joy upon that great occasion. Observe lastly, the cause of *Babylon's* ruin is here assigned, *she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication*. Where note, 1. That by *fornication* her errors, idolatries, and false worship, are understood. Note, 2. That these are compared to wine upon several accounts. Is wine pleasant to the palate! so is idolatry to corrupt nature, which is hugely pleased with a pompous worship and a sensual religion. Is wine inflaming! so is idolatry; inflaming themselves with idols, Isa. lvii. 6. Does the wine deceive, and insensibly steal upon the drinker, and intoxicate him ere he is aware of it: so doth error and idolatry grow upon persons by insensible degrees; and accordingly, chap. xiii. 14. the beast is said to deceive them that dwell on the earth: in a word, as persons drunk with wine are altogether incapable of counsel and advice from their best friends, in like manner such as are drunk with error and idolatry, with the wine of the whore's fornication, are besotted, benumbed, will not acknowledge their error, nor receive instruction. Note, 3. That this wine, as sweet as it is, is called *the wine of wrath*, partly because it inflames them that are drunk therewith with rage and cruel fury against sincere worshippers, and partly because it brings the wrath of God upon them that drink it: little do idolaters think of this, because it is a worship of their own invention, it pleases them because it feasts their outward senses, it is grateful as wine unto them; but they forget that it is wine mixed with wrath, even with the wrath of God, the dregs of which shall be wrung out, and all idolaters shall drink them up.

9 And the third angel followed

them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation: and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

Observe here, the great and special care which Almighty God takes to warn men and women of those dreadful plagues which should most certainly come upon the heads of idolaters: *a third angel followed, crying with a loud voice*. O how good is God in that he does always premonish before he punishes, warns before he strikes, and advises all not to partake with others their sins, lest they be partakers of their plagues! Observe, 2. A most dreadful denunciation of the wrath of God, against all those who shall *worship the beast and his image*, that is, submit to the enjoined idolatry, and receive *his* mark in their foreheads or hands, that is, yield obedience to the beast as a servant, and openly own subjection to him as his slaves. Lord! what a dreadful guiltiness is it to follow antichrist, and to continue obstinate in idolatry, after God has sent one angel after another, minister after minister, to acquaint them both with their sin and danger! Observe, 3. The denunciation itself in the several parts of it, 1. *They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God*, that is, for their sin shall partake of severe judgments, the effects of God's wrath. Mark, Here is wine for wine, for the *wine of Babylon's fornication*, here is the *wine of the wrath of God*; the former wine was not so sweet, but the latter shall be as sharp. 2. Here is the quality of this wrath, *it is poured out without mixture*: its being poured out shows the abundance of it, and without mixture shows that it is without the least drop of mercy to allay the extremity of their torment. 3. It is called *a cup of indignation*, thereby intimating, that it is not the correction of a father, which is accompanied with lenity and love, but the vengeance of a judge that designs utter destruction. 4. Here is the effect of their drinking of this cup of the Lord's indignation, their being tormented with fire and brimstone:

which expression denotes these sinners' torments to be most exquisite, both intolerable and interminable, and their punishment both easeless and endless. 5. It is here said, that this their torment shall be in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb; in the sight of the Lamb, against whom, and in the sight of the angels, before whom they had sinned, in worshipping the beast; they shall see them, but none shall help them. 6. The eternity as well as the extremity of their torments is here set forth: *their smoke ascends for ever and ever*; the torments of hell are here set forth as most acute and exquisite, and as endless and easeless, they have no rest day nor night, nor a moment's ease. It is well observed by Mr. Mede, that there is not a more terrible description of punishment in the whole book of God, than is here denounced against those idolaters which adhere to the beast; *the smoke of their torment*, that is, the fire and smoke wherewith they were tormented, ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night. And if the church of Rome, or Papal Babylon, be here intended, and not Pagan, as most Protestants believe and affirm, then this shows that those of her communion, living and dying in a firm adherence to the chief doctrines of Popery, and framing their lives by them, after they have had, or might have had, sufficient means to convince them of their error and idolatry, do expose their salvation to extreme hazard and danger. Blessed be God for our happy reformation, from the idolatry and superstition, from the tyranny and oppression, and the intolerable yoke, of the church of Rome. God grant we may be reformed in our lives as well as in our religion, otherwise our damnation is as sure as theirs is great, for the holiest doctrine and purest worship will be of no avail to impure worshippers and unholy livers; it matters not what church or what communion a bad man is of, for it is certain he cannot be saved by any.

12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

That is, here at this time will be exercised all the faith and patience of Christ's faithful servants, and this their exercise of these graces will make it appear that they were true, and not counterfeit Christians; it follows, *here are they which keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus*, that is, who discover themselves sincere in their profession, by obeying the commands of God, and rightly believing on our

Lord Jesus Christ. Where note, What is the characteristic mark of a sincere Christian, namely, faith and obedience united together; faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to the will of God in all things, are never separated where they are sincere.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours: and their works do follow them.

These words in their original and primary intention were delivered by the Spirit, and commanded to be written by St. John, for the support and comfort of the church under that severe persecution which should befall it; and to declare the happy condition of martyrs particularly, and such as die for the Lord; but they may be considered in a greater latitude, and be of general use to the church of God in all ages, and under all circumstances, and administer comfort to all believers who die in the Lord, that is, in the faith of the Lord, in the fear of the Lord, and in the favour of the Lord, to all that die sincere Christians, both in faith and practice. Here note, 1. A solemn declaration of the blessed state of good men after this life; their death is blessed, and a blessing to them. Note, 2. The time from whence their blessedness commences, *from henceforth*, that is, from the time of their death, then doth their blessedness begin. Thence learn, That all good Christians immediately upon their dissolution and departure out of this life are in a blessed and happy condition. Note, 3. Wherein the blessedness of the righteous after their departure doth consist: 1. In resting from their labours, that is, from all the troubles, sorrows, and sufferings, from all the calamities, infirmities, and miseries of this frail, mortal state; no sin shall affect them, no sorrow afflict them, no danger affright them. 2. In reaping the comfort of all the good works they have done in the world, *their works follow them*; that is, 1. A delightful remembrance of their good works is found with them, which if it refreshes their souls with transporting pleasure now, how will it swallow them up with the highest transports of complacency and delight then! 2. The blessed fruits and happy effects of their good works, and the special reward belonging to them, shall accompany good men into another world, which will render them completely blessed, by procuring for them, through the merits of our Lord Jesus

Christ, an admission into heaven, where they shall drink of those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. Note lastly, How this truth concerning the future blessedness of the righteous deserves our most serious and attentive regard and meditation, because delivered by an audible voice from heaven, expressly commanded to be written, and confirmed by the solemn asseveration of the Spirit, *I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.*

14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap: for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

In these verses a description is given of Christ as coming to judgment, to inflict punishment upon his stubborn enemies; and here we have the judge described, 1. By his form or shape, he was one like the Son of man. 2. By his place and posture of judgment, sitting on a white cloud, the cloud denoting the sovereignty of the judge, and whiteness prefiguring the uprightness of his proceedings, and both signifying his speed and swiftness in coming to execute judgment; on this white cloud did he sit, denoting thereby both his composedness and freedom from all passion and perturbation as a judge, and also his majesty and authority, sitting as a king upon his throne, as well as like a judge upon his tribunal. 3. He is described by his royal ornament, *having on his head a golden crown.* Behold here the different estate of our Lord Jesus Christ above, from what it was here below; here crowned with thorns, there crowned with gold, the reward of his sufferings! Blessed be God, that as it was with the Head, so shall it be with all the members! 4. By the instrument which he had in his hand fit for the work which he had in his hand, namely, a sharp sickle for the reaping of the earth. A sickle is a circular instrument, and compasseth the corn round about, which is to be cut down; the judgment of Christ upon the wicked will inclose them all, not a soul of them shall be able to escape it; and a sharp sickle signifies the quality of his judgment,

that it will be severe. Behold here the unavoidable destruction of the wicked, and how impossible it is for them to escape the judgments of Christ; all the wicked together are no more in the hand of Christ than as an handful of grass, or ripe corn, to a sharp sickle in a strong hand.

In the fifteenth verse we have a manifestation of the church's fervent desire that Christ would make speed, and hasten his work, and come quickly to judgment, both for the consummation of their glory, and for the destruction of his own and their enemies: *Thrust in thy sickle, and reap, for the harvest is ripe*; that is, it is full time to execute thy judgment on the wicked, for their sins (which call for these judgments) are now come to the height. Behold here Christ's day of judgment is like a day of harvest; when the corn is ripe, the sickle is got ready; when the sickle is got ready, it is set to work; when it is set to work, it cuts down all, wheat and tares, corn and grass, without discrimination; but the Lord of the harvest soon commands a separation to be made of the good grain from the tares, of the righteous from the wicked, laying up the former in the granary of heaven, binding up the latter for the fire of hell.

In the sixteenth verse we have observable, 1. Christ's ready answering of, and complying with, the desire of his people, to thrust in the sickle of his judgment, and reap the earth: *he that sat on the cloud did thrust in his sickle.* How ready is Christ to fulfil the desires of them that fear him, to hear their cry and help them in his own time, in the best and fittest season! Observe, 2. The great and infinite power of our Lord Jesus Christ, that upon the thrusting in of his sickle, the whole earth was presently reaped. Behold the ability of Christ for judgment, as well as his impartiality in judging: such a Judge is he, as the power of the mightiest cannot daunt; such a Judge, as the riches of the wealthiest cannot bribe; such a Judge, as the subtlety of the wisest cannot deceive; in a word, such a Judge, as there is no appealing from, no repealing of, his sentence. O great day; when the stiffest knee shall bow at the tribunal of Christ, and the strongest back shall bend under the insupportable burden of the wrath of the Lamb; when the Alexanders and Cæsars, which once shook the earth, and caused the world to tremble, shall revere and lie prostrate at the foot of Christ! Behold then, and admire the wonderful power and dexterity of Christ in judging, that upon the thrusting in of his sickle the whole earth was presently reaped!

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. 19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. 20 And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

In the former verses we meet with the metaphor of an harvest, in these we meet with that of a vintage; there the wicked were compared to rice corn fit for the harvest, here to ripe grapes fit for the wine-press; signifying by both, that the wicked, by filling up the measure of their sins, do make themselves ripe and ready for judgment. Note here, 1. That as the true church is called a vine, so is the wicked antichristian church here called; but with this addition, *a vine of the earth*, cleaving to, and only favouring of, the earth; a good name will signify little in judgment; to be called Christians, virgins, &c. what will it profit, without burning and shining lamps? Note, 2. Whereas the grapes of this vine are said to be not only ripe, but fully ripe, how great is the forbearance and long-suffering of God towards the wicked! *Maximum miraculum est Dei longanimitas*, the patience of God towards sinners is the greatest miracle in the world: but though lasting it will not be everlasting; when long abused, it turns at last into fury; ripening in sin, is a sure prognostication of judgment at hand. Note, 3. The vine with all its clusters are gathered, small and great, one and another, all shall appear before the bar of Christ, chap. xx. 12. *I saw the dead small and great stand before God: and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those books.* Note, 4. Whether this degenerated vine, with all its clusters, was cast, namely, into the wine-press of God's wrath, which is called a *great wine-press*, because it can contain all the wicked; it will hold them all, be they never so many; and is said to be trodden, that is, by Christ, denoting the severity of

that vengeance which will be inflicted upon sinners; the grapes which have hung a long time ripening in the sun are severely preest at last. Note, 5. That the blood which came out of the wine-press (the blood of the grape) was so much in quantity, that it came up to the horses' bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs; all metaphorical expressions, signifying that wine is the wrath of God, and the cup of his indignation; and the hyperbolical expression of its height, reaching as high as the horses' bridles; and of its length, reaching more than a thousand furlongs, shows that mighty deluge and inundation of God's wrath, which the wicked in general, and all Antichrist's followers in particular, shall not only drink of, but swim in: and as they shed the blood of the saints abundantly, in like manner God will give them blood to drink in great abundance. Note lastly, That although these two metaphors of the *harvest* and the *vintage* signify one thing, only the vision is doubled, like Pharaoh's dream, to show the certainty thereof, yet we may conceive that the similitude of a vintage here holds forth greater judgment than the harvest: Almighty God, in his providential dispensation towards the wicked, proceeds gradually; as they proceed from one degree of wickedness, so does he from one degree of wrath and vengeance, to another; the vintage follows the harvest, the sharp sickle follows the sickle, the harvest is said to be ripe, the vintage to be fully ripe; if the flood of God's anger in this life will not wash sinners clean, the deluge of his wrath in the next will wash them quite away: *Blood came out of the wine-press, even to the horses' bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.* Eternal thanks to Christ the Lamb, who has delivered his from this dreadful wrath to come!

CHAP. XV.

AND I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues: for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

This and the following chapter acquaints us with a fresh vision, which St. John had of the pouring forth of the vials, or the inflicting of the seven last plagues and judgments upon the world; upon the Heathen world, say some; upon the antichristian world, say most; *I saw seven angels having the seven last plagues: for in them is filled up the wrath of God;* where, by seven angels, understand the ministers and executioners of

the wrath of God; by the *seven plagues*, understand the last dreadful judgments that should be inflicted, which would make a final end of him, whoever he be, that they should be poured forth upon, one after another. Where note, 1. How the patience, forbearance, and long-suffering goodness, of God, is wonderfully seen in his carriage towards sinners; though he punishes the wicked sometimes, to let them see that his justice is not asleep, yet he doth not stir up all his wrath, nor poureth it out all at once upon them, but gradually; desirous of and waiting for their repentance, even when he has begun in justice to punish them. Note, 2. Whereas it is said, *in them* (that is, in the present seven plagues) *is filled up the wrath of God*; we learn, what final impenitency, and incorrigibleness under former judgments, will produce at last; namely, judgment to the uttermost: ripeness in sin will at last make men ripe for ruin; and when they have filled up the measure of their sins, God will fill up the measure of his *wrath*; *in them is filled up the wrath of God*.

2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. 3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. 4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou only art holy*: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

There seems here to be an allusion to the Israelites' deliverance out of Egypt, and to the song of *Moses* upon that occasion, recorded *Exod. xv*. As they were delivered out of literal *Egypt*; so these from mystical *Egypt*, both nests of idolatry and false worship; a deliverance from both which deservedly called for a song of thanksgiving. *I saw a sea of glass mingled with fire*; that is, a great number of pure, zealous Christians, their multitude being represented by the *sea*, their purity by *glass*, and their zeal by *fire*. *Who had gotten victory over the beast, and over his image*; that is, who overcome all temptations to idolatry, both from the Pagan and antichristian

emperors, called the beast and his image. *Having the harps of God in their hand*, in allusion to the musical instruments used in the temple-service, and denoting hearts fitted for, and tuned by, the Spirit of God; to praise him with cheerfulness for preserving them from being overcome by temptations to idolatry. Learn hence, That such as are sincerely gracious, are truly thankful to God for all his benefits and blessings, but especially for their preservation from sin, and their getting victory over temptations. Observe next, the work of solemn praise and thanksgiving, which these purified and preserved souls were engaged in and employed about: *They sung the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord*. Where note, 1. The title of the song, namely, *the song of Moses and the Lamb*. The song of *Moses*, that is, a song much like unto that of Moses and the Israelites after they had passed safely through the Red Sea, *Exod. xv*. and the *song of the Lamb*, so called, because it was a song indited by the Spirit of the Lamb, and tending to advance the glory of the Lamb. Note, 2. The matter of the song, which is divided into two parts, 1. The church's confession and declaration of those works which Christ doth: *Great and marvellous are thy works, just and true are thy ways*; that is, they are great and wonderful works, fit only to be done by him who is the Lord God Almighty; *just and true*, well becoming him who is King of saints. 2. The use which the church makes of these works; and that is, 1. To record, celebrate, and publish them. 2. To oblige and bind themselves faster and closer to him in his worship and service: *Who shall not fear thee, O Lord! and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy*. Observe farther, The titles which are here by the church given unto God. 1. *The Lord God Almighty*. A title full of comfort to the saints in their greatest straits, and full of terror to their enemies in the midst of their abundance. 2. He is styled *King of Saints*, they receiving special protection from him, and he exercising a particular care over them. 3. *He only is said to be holy*, that is, essentially and causally: essentially in himself, and causally with respect to us: all holiness is originally in him, all holiness is derivative from him, therefore should the praise thereof be given to him. Observe lastly, The duty inferred from all those glorious titles which are here given to God, and for all the great and marvellous works done by him: *Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?* As if he had said, "All ought to do so, and there is great rea-

son for so doing." As God is to be feared, because he is full of power and justice, so then especially should his people fear him when he is taking vengeance on his enemies, his own and his church's adversaries: *Who shall not fear thee? for thy judgments are manifest.*

5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

Observe here, 1. The vision which St. John had: he thought he saw the Holy of holies open to him, and seven angels coming forth with seven plagues, as the executioners of God's judgments upon idolatrous persons. Where note, 1. The instruments employed by God for executing his wrath upon sinners, *angels, seven angels*; not that he needs them, but he is pleased to make use of them; and they are but instruments in his hand, his bow and his battle-axe, mere dead tools, who receive all their efficacy from the hand that uses them: their presence adds no strength to him, their absence makes the work no more difficult before him. Note, 2. From whence these seven angels came, namely, *out of the temple*, out of the oracle, more immediately from the presence of God; implying, that they came forth to execute vengeance by God's special directions, and not barely by his permission: and consequently that the work was very acceptable and well-pleasing unto God which they went about. Note, 3. How they are furnished, *having seven plagues*; namely, to inflict upon the idolatrous enemies of the church. Note, 4. In and after what manner these angels were apparelled and appeared. 1. They were clothed in *pure, white linen*, to denote the holiness of their persons, as also the holiness of that work which they had then in hand. 2. This clothing of theirs was girded to them, expressing thereby their great readiness for, and their great alacrity and cheerfulness in, their work. 3. The girdle wherewith they were girded was a *golden girdle*, exactly answering the habit of the High-priest, when he entered into the Holy of holies to enquire of God, or came out with an answer from God. From the whole learn, That when the Lord comes to pull down Babylon as well as to build up Zion, he will appear in glory: the angels are God's special ministers; when they go forth to pour out the vials of his wrath

upon Babylon, they appear gloriously apparelled, glittering like the High-priest, and girded with golden girdles.

7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials, full of the wrath of God who liveth for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power: and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

Observe here, 1. That what was called seven plagues in the foregoing verse, is here called *seven golden vials full of the wrath of God*; in this verse vials are full cups. Vials of wrath are prepared when the measures of a people's sins are filled up; full cups of sin are followed with full vials of God's wrath. Next, these vials are said to be of *gold*, signifying, that these judgments proceed from a just God, with whom there is no corruption nor iniquity in judgments, he being holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. These vials are also said to be *full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever*, as an aggravation of the same, it not being like the wrath of a mortal man, of short continuance, but of endless duration; it is the wrath of him that ever lives to maintain his wrath, and to uphold and sustain the sinner under the execution and infliction of his wrath, that the sinner cannot run from him. O what a fearful thing is it to fall into the hands of the living God, whose wrath is both intolerable and interminable! the sinner can neither stand under it, nor flee from it. Observe, 2. The executioners of this wrath are said to be *seven angels*. The angels which are merciful attendants upon the godly, are also at God's command the executioners of his wrath upon the wicked. These angels are here said to be *seven*, to signify that God's judgments upon his church's adversaries shall be heavy and great, one angel plagued all *Egypt*, and destroyed *Sennacherib's* mighty host, but here went out seven angels to destroy antichrist. Observe, 3. The tremendous dreadfulness of this wrath, intimated by filling *the temple with smoke*; thereby signifying, that the wrath of God kindled against his enemies shall be unto them like a devouring and consuming fire, before the flame of which burst forth, a cloud of smoke appears. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power. Learn thence, that Almighty God is glorified in the destruction, as well as in the salvation, of

sinner; his glory is as well seen in his smoking wrath against the wicked, as in his saving mercy towards the godly. *The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power*; it follows,—*No man was able to enter into the temple*: that is, to deprecate God's anger, and supplicate his mercy, or to avert the plagues threatened, and now just ready to be inflicted: when mercy has been long offered and despised, the Lord at last becomes inexorable, and will suffer none to intercede or plead with him: *Jer. xv.* Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind cannot be towards this people; cast them out of my sight, &c. The sins of a people may sometimes grow to such an height, that Almighty God will no longer be entreated; and when we know it, it is our duty to cease praying for them, *Woe, woe, woe* be unto such a people!

CHAP. XVI.

In the former chapter, preparation was made and a general commission given, for inflicting the seven plagues, and pouring forth the seven vials, upon the antichristian state. In this chapter we read an account at large of the infliction of those plagues, and the effusion of those vials accordingly; and forasmuch as Rome is often in this prophecy compared to Egypt, Sodom, and Babylon, for their idolatry, cruelty, and other sins, Almighty God is here pleased to parallel her plagues with theirs; and it is observable, that many of the plagues mentioned in this chapter do very nearly resemble the plagues of Egypt, recorded in the book of Exodus; as will appear by consulting the chapter itself, which speaks thus.

AND I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

Observe here, 1. The command given to the seven angels, the executioners of God's justice, to do their office, namely, in pouring out the vials of his wrath upon the earth. The command is here said to be given by a *voice*, by a *great voice*, because it was the command of a great God, and about a great work; and it is said to come out of the temple, in allusion to the holy of holies, the place of God's exhibiting himself, and from whence he gave forth oracles of old. Observe, 2. How the seven angels (the instruments of God in executing his judgments) receive their commission from God, and pour not out one vial on the earth till they are required so to do; and being called *vials of the wrath of God*, it gives us this intimation, that what is done against antichrist, is not the effect of man's revenge, but the fruit of God's wrath; and whereas vials are ves-

sels of large content, but of narrow mouths, which pour out slowly, but distil effectually, and drench deeply, it imports that the wrath of God is, though slow, yet sure; it comes upon sinners gradually; but if upon its approach they repent not, it will at last, like a mighty torrent, wash them away from off the earth.

2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

Observe here, 1. What allusion this plague inflicted upon Babylon has to that plague which God of old inflicted upon Egypt, *Exod. ix. 9.* Egypt had her boil, breaking forth with blains, upon men and upon beast; in like manner the worshippers of the beast have noisome and grievous sores upon them; that is, great trouble and uneasiness of mind, upon the first prospect of the shaking of their kingdom, by discovering the vanity, blasphemy, hypocrisy, and tyranny, of their devised religion; even as sores and blains do vex and torture those that are troubled with them. Learn hence, That it is no small vexation and trouble to the wicked, when they have their sins detected and discovered; it is as great a torture to their minds as an ulcer or boil is to their bodies.

3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea. 4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

Observe here, That this second and third plague poured out upon the sea, and the rivers of waters, whereby they became blood, have a manifest allusion to that plague of Egypt whereby all the waters were turned into blood, *Exod. vii. 19.* Observe farther, That by the sea and the rivers full of blood, the bloody persecutors in the antichristian church are supposed to be meant, who by slaughter and bloodshed seek to plant and propagate a bloody religion throughout the earth. Observe, lastly, That the pouring out of these vials gradually and successively upon idolaters and persecutors, and not altogether and all at once, but one after another, teaches us how abounding the patience, forbearance, and long-suffering goodness of God is, even towards the worst of sinners; not

willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

5 And I heard the angels of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. 7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

These verses seem to be a key to let us into the right understanding of the verses immediately foregoing; and clearly show, that as the idolatrous enemies of the church did shed the blood of saints and martyrs, so should theirs be shed: which is called *their having blood to drink*. Here note, 1. The approbation which the angel gives of the equity and righteousness of God's judgments upon these bloody persecutors. *Righteous art thou, O Lord, for thou hast given them blood to drink*. Where the retribution which God makes of blood for blood, shows the righteousness of God in his judgments inflicted; and also declares that Almighty God doth sometimes so suit his judgments to the sin committed, that persons may read their sin in their punishment. As these persecutors thirsted after blood, so here they get blood to drink. Note, 2. How the angel in the fifth verse, and the other in the seventh verse, do both rejoice in the execution of God's judgments, and in the terrible revenge of the blood of saints. For thus they sing, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy judgments*.

8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues; and they repented not to give him glory.

Observe here, 1. That the fourth vial is said to be poured forth upon the sun, which metaphorically taken in scripture usually signifies some great prince or potentate: here the head of the antichristian party is supposed to be the sun, upon which the wrath of this vial falls. Observe, 2. The effect which followed hereupon, power was given him to scorch men with fire; and the event which ensued was double, men blasphemed the name of God, and repented not to give him glory. Learn hence, 1. That al-

though God sends his judgments to call the wicked to repentance, yet they will not repent of sin, even when they lie under the wrathful hand of God, but will rather break forth to further wickedness, even to blaspheme the holy name of God. Learn, 2. That what the damned do in hell, where the wrath of God is poured out upon men to the uttermost, that do incorrigible and unreclaimable sinners upon earth; they are scorched with great heat, the vengeance of God cometh upon them, they are mad and enraged, and blaspheme the holy and just God, who bringeth such plagues upon them; but they have no sense of their sins, no thoughts of turning unto God, or of giving glory to him: these men here blasphemed, but repented not.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

Observe here, 1. The gradual approaches which Almighty God makes by his plagues and judgments towards the antichristian beast; he began farther off at first, and then came nearer and nearer to him; the first vial was poured out upon the earth, the second upon the sea, the third upon the rivers, the fourth upon the sun, now the fifth upon the seat of the beast; that is, probably, the seat of his empire, the chief place where he appeareth in the highest majesty and glory. This should teach us all at the first alarm of judgments to draw near to God by a true and timely repentance, before he comes nearer to us by a succession of plagues and punishments. Observe, 2. The effect and consequent which did ensue and follow upon the pouring out of this vial upon the throne or seat of the beast. 1. His kingdom was full of darkness; this vial did not destroy, but distress him; it filled his kingdom with the darkness of misery and trouble, of calamity and confusion; not but that the kingdom of the beast was a kingdom of darkness before, but that darkness was a darkness of ignorance and error: this is a darkness of calamity and horror; by the loss of that lustre, respect, and reverence, which the throne of the beast had before, but was wanting now. 2. As an evidence of this distress, it is here said, that they gnawed their tongues for pain, that is, they were almost distracted at the declining of their grandeur. Where note, 1. From the gnaw

ing of their tongues, which was an indication of the horror of their consciences, that as Almighty God makes the guilty consciences of the wicked to be their own accusers, so he can make them, whenever he pleases, to be their own tormentors. Note, How Almighty God so suits his judgments sometimes to a people's sins, as that if they do not wink hard, or wilfully shut their eyes, they may and must see and read their sin in their punishment. These worshippers of the beast seduced others by their false doctrine, and sinned with their tongues, and now God makes their tongues like so many scorpions' tails, the instruments of their torment: *They gnawed their tongues for pain*; it is added, *That they blasphemed the God of heaven, and repented not of their deeds*. Where note, That as the plagues he inflicted resembled the plagues of Egypt, so the worshippers of the beast, whom they were inflicted upon, resembled Pharaoh king of Egypt, who hardened his heart yet more and more against the Lord, and repented not.

12 And the sixth angel poured forth his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

Observe here, 1. In the drying up of the river Euphrates, a manifest allusion to the manner of old Babylon's destruction. The river Euphrates ran through old Babylon, and was a greater defence to it than its celebrated walls, which for thickness and height were the wonder of the world. Cyrus, when he took Babylon, cut many ditches, and let the river Euphrates run out, and so he and his soldiers entered the city, then fordable, and took it. Now, as the drying up of Euphrates, then, was an immediate forerunner of the destruction of Babylon, in like manner the drying up of Euphrates, signify it what it will, shall be the immediate forerunner of the destruction of antichristian Babylon, whenever it shall be. The Romish Euphrates being dried up, the Romish Babylon will hasten again towards its final ruin. *Quest.* But what is meant by Euphrates here? *Answer.* Probably the Turkish empire, according to Mr. Mede and Dr. More, the Turks first taking up their habitation about this great river: so that by Euphrates may be understood the people inhabiting about Euphrates; and by drying up its waters, the diminishing and lessening of their empire. By the kings of the east, the Jews are said to be understood, who inhabit the eastern countries, to whom God made a promise,

Exod. xix. 6. that they should be a kingdom of priests: so that here seems to be a prophecy of the Jews' conversion to the Christian religion, which two things do chiefly hinder, namely, the idolatry of Rome, and the power of Constantinople; the image-worship of the Papists, and the puissance of the Turks: but both these being taken away by the fall of Babylon, and the ruin of the Turks, the way then will seem prepared for the Jews' receiving of the Christian faith. Taking the words in this sense, the notes are these, 1. That the days will come wherein Christian princes and states shall pour out the wrath of God upon Popish idolatry and Turkish tyranny. 2. That the pouring out of the wrath of God upon both these grand enemies of God, will prepare and make ready the way for the Jews' conversion to him.

13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

In the foregoing verses an account was given of the subject upon which the sixth vial was poured out, namely, upon the river Euphrates. Here we have an effect that followed thereupon, namely, a warlike expedition, or gathering to battle. Where note, 1. The principal commanders in this battle, namely, the *dragon*, the *beast*, and the *false prophet*. 2. The instruments employed and made use of by them, who are here said to be, for their nature, *spirits*, for their quality, *unclean*, for their number, *three*, for their similitude and resemblance, *like frogs*; namely, with respect to their original, they breed of corruption, and in great numbers swarm and croak in all places, and live both in the water and upon the earth: by all which many interpreters understand emissaries, missionaries, negotiators, solicitors, and legates, sent forth and employed by antichrist for the support and strengthening both of him and his kingdom, by soliciting the kings of the earth to join together in a battle against the church. Behold here how the *dragon*, the *beast*, and the *false prophet*, do send forth all their emissaries, and employ all their instruments, do stir up princes, and engage them in battle, to withstand the reformation of Christians, and the conversion of the

Jews: I saw unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and go forth to the kings of the earth to gather them to battle. Observe farther, The actions here said to be performed by them, namely, their working miracles by the power of the devils; that is, such wonderful things as Satan can sometimes produce, or at least delude people's senses, and make them believe that they are produced and effected by him. Where note, That the advantage which the false church makes of a pretended power with her to work miracles, the Spirit of God both here and elsewhere (2 *Thess.* ii. 9.) makes to be a badge of antichrist and his followers: *They are the spirits of devils, working miracles.*

15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

These consolatory words of Christ seem to be inserted here for the support of the faithful servants of God, against those great preparations of the enemy in the day of battle. *Behold*, says Christ, I then come as a thief, secretly, suddenly, and unexpectedly, to destroy these enemies when they least expect me; and then I am at hand to take vengeance on them, and to deliver my church when they least think of me: *Blessed is he that watcheth*, namely, against those temptations which he will be then exposed to: *and keepeth his garments*, that is, his profession unspotted from sin, and the defilements of antichrist; *lest he walk naked*, that is, appear as a man destitute of uprightness and sincerity; *and they see his shame*, which ever follows upon a sinful course. Note here, 1. That when Christ comes, he comes suddenly, even as a thief cometh. 2. That although Christ comes suddenly, and as a thief; yet he is pleased to give us warning of his coming: *Behold, I come.* 3. That when Christ's coming is near at hand, there is danger that many for want of watchfulness will lose their garments. 4. That is, to such as through negligence shall lose their garments, this misery will befall them; they shall walk naked, and men shall see their shame. 5. That those few who watch and keep their garments, are certainly in a happy and blessed condition: *Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments.*

16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

He, that is, Almighty God, by his permissive providence suffered the kings of

the earth to hearken to antichrist's missionaries, who, like frogs, hop abroad even into kings' palaces, and persuade them to assemble and gather together, as Jabin and Sisera gathered together against Israel, to their own destruction: and whereas the place of their gathering together is called Armageddon, this is so named from the event of the battle; signifying such a place where the enemies of the church shall be destroyed. Learn hence, That the event and success of that battle, which the adherents of antichrist shall fight for him, will be desperate destruction to themselves, joyful victories and triumphs to the churches of Christ.

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. 18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. 19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath, 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

These words describe and declare unto us the pouring out of the seventh vial by the seventh angel; in which we have observable, 1. The subject upon which it fell, namely, the air; not the elements of air, earth, or water, are to be understood in this chapter literally; for the vials poured forth are vials of wrath, and consequently are poured forth upon the proper objects of God's displeasure, which the elements are not; but it is the earthly antichristian church which is thought to be here intended, so called in opposition to the heavenly and pure church. So that by the air, here, Mr. Mede understands all the subjects of Satan's kingdom, who is called the prince of the air; and the pouring out of this vial upon the air denotes the full and final destruction of Satan's

power. Observe, 2. The adjunct accompanying the pouring out of this vial, namely, a voice out of heaven, saying, *It is done*; that is, "These last plagues are now finished, the work of God is done, and what in his counsels he designed for the destruction of his enemies, and for the deliverance of his people: this is said to be *done*, because it was now *doing*; and accomplished, because it was now *accomplishing*." God's threatenings of judgment (except man repent) are as sure when denounced as if they were already executed. Observe, 3. The direful effects and dreadful consequences of this last vial's pouring forth, namely, 1. *Thunder, lightning, and earthquake*: all implying thus much, that the storm of God's wrath, now coming upon the kingdoms of sin, Satan, and Antichrist, would be very terrible and amazing. 2. *The great city was divided into three parts*; into three factions, say some, and that Antichrist's kingdom was now falling by being divided within itself. *And the cities of the nations fell*, namely, Heathens, nations, and places which withstood Christ and his gospel. For all Christ's enemies are now to be deposed from public authority. *And great Babylon came up in remembrance before God*; not that God was ever unmindful of her, either of her impiety towards himself, or of her cruelty towards his people: but as good works are said to be remembered when they are rewarded, so wickedness is then remembered when it is punished. *God remembered Babylon*, when for the full cup of her sins, he put into her hand a full cup of wine of the fierceness of his wrath. God is never forgetful either of his church's sufferings, or his enemies' sins, but will punish the one, and redress the other, in his own appointed time. 3. As another effect of the pouring forth of this vial, it is added, *every island fled away and the mountains were not to be found*; signifying, say some, that the remotest and strongest places, which owned and maintained Babylon, shall either be converted or confounded. Intimating, say others, that there shall be no place in that day of God's wrath to flee unto for safety; neither island in the sea, nor mountain on dry land. Observe lastly, The superadded judgment of unusual hail which God poured forth upon Babylon, as before upon Egypt, *Exod. ix. There fell great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent*. An hyperbolical expression, setting forth the design and purpose of God to pursue Babylon, and the worshippers of the *beast*, until they be utterly destroyed. A talent, say some, was an hundred pound weight; if so, these hail-stones were suffi-

cient not only to kill men, but to dash them all in pieces. This heavy hail shows that weighty sins procure heavy judgments; yet mark what a bad use these obdurate sinners made of all these tremendous judgments, *they blasphemed God*. They were so obstinate in their idolatry, that they stood it out against all God's judgments; and when they should have humbled themselves under his mighty hand, they opened their mouths in blasphemies against him. Here note, that in the book of *Exodus* we do not read that the old Egyptians blasphemed God when the plague of hail was inflicted upon them, nor when they lay under any of the ten plagues; but these idolaters instead of giving glory to God, they blasphemed him, because of the greatness of their plagues. This perhaps is an emblem of what the damned will do at the day of judgment: though their consciences be convinced of the righteousness of their sentence, yet they will not cease to pour out blasphemies against God, upon the account of the severity and eternity of their torments. But verily then will all the divine attributes be conspicuously glorified, his wonderful clemency sweetly displayed, his exact justice terribly demonstrated, his perfect wisdom clearly unfolded, and all the knotty intricacies of providence wisely resolved, and the injured honour and glory of Almighty God visibly cleared and repaired, to the joyful satisfaction of all good men, and to the dreadful consternation and confusion of all impenitent sinners, who with these worshippers of the *beast* will gnaw their tongues for anguish, and blaspheme the holy and just God most unjustly, for bringing upon them that destruction which they had deserved, yea, that damnation which they had chosen.

CHAP. XVII.

AND there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth on many waters;

Observe here, 1. The angel's invitation to the subsequent vision, *One of the angels, talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee, &c.* Where we see the readiness of those ministering spirits, the holy angels, to do any good office for the saints, and with what cheerfulness they are employed about things for our consolation, and the sweet familiarity that is between them and the saints, evidenced by that expression,

He talked with me, saying, Come hither. Observe, 2. The promise which the angel makes to St. John, namely, *to show him the judgment of the great whore.* By the whore, all understand the city of Rome; only some will have it Rome Pagan, others Rome Papal, or the great idolatrous city and church of Rome. Idolatry is often in scripture style called whoredom; and idolaters are said to go a whoring from God. A whore is a person married to an husband, who afterwards proves false to his bed. The Papal present church of Rome deserves this name, having been guilty of the greatest defection and apostasy from the true evangelical doctrine and worship that ever was in the world; and she is deservedly also called the *great whore*, because of her whoredoms committed with so many under her power and jurisdiction, having many people subject to her, and for that reason is here said to *sit upon many waters.* The true church is Christ's bride and spouse, she is betrothed unto him in righteousness, in loving-kindness, and in tender mercy; and at any time by idolatry to apostatize from him is spiritual whoredom, which shall not pass without deserved punishment. Learn hence, How hateful idolatry is to God, and how highly it provokes God's wrath, even as the whoredom of a woman who plays the common harlot provokes the jealousy of her husband. Verily, never was husband more jealous of the chastity of his suspected wife, than God is jealous in point of worship.

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

Babylon was charged with committing whoredom in the former verse; in this the persons are declared *whom* she committed whoredom with, *viz.* with *kings*, and the *inhabitants* of the earth; that is, with all sorts of persons, small and great, rich and poor. Where note, That she is, 1. A catholic whore, common and shameless; she refuses none that will be lewd with her. 2. A politic whore; she first draws kings and princes to commit fornication with her, and then other inhabitants; well knowing how fast the example of superiors is commonly followed by inferiors: and whereas she is said to *make them drunk with the wine of her fornication*, the Spirit of God seems to intimate that idolatry is like unto wine; a sensual sort of worship, and therefore alluring: making persons drunk, therefore

intoxicating. Wine is sweet, but proves deceitful; idolatry is pleasing to man's corrupt nature, but brings wrath and judgment upon the sinner.

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet-colour, and decked with gold and precious stones, and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. 5 And upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Observe here, 1. That St. John was not in one continued ecstasy, but at several times in *the spirit*, that is, in an ecstasy or rapture of mind, wherein his outward senses being bound up, his understanding was fixed and raised up to the contemplation of divine objects, represented to him in the vision. A spiritual frame of mind is requisite for discerning the visions of God: *He carried me away in the spirit.* Observe, 2. The place whither St. John was carried, and where he saw the following vision, namely, *in the wilderness*; *He carried me away into the wilderness*; a place of privacy, say some, where he might discern things undisturbedly and undistractedly. Solitude is fittest for contemplation. A wilderness, say others, was the fittest place to see *that church* in a vision, which was itself *a wilderness*; the apostolical church before was driven into the wilderness; here the apostate church follows her, as an harlot succeeding to a faithful city. Observe, 3. The vision itself, *I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, &c.* The woman here is the same with her that was called whore, *ver.* 1. namely, idolatrous Rome; she is represented as a woman richly and splendidly arrayed, with her wealth and riches, with her pomp and power, enticing the world to her idolatry, called so often whoredom and spiritual fornication; and the *golden cup* in her hand is an allusion to harlots, who with their philters, or enchanted cups, do allure and provoke men to sensual satisfaction; in like manner doth Rome by her outward splendour allure, and by other specious pretences and means draw persons to idol-

atries and superstitions. Note lastly, The name written on her forehead, to wit, *Mystery, Babylon the Great*; that is, not literal, but mystical *Babylon*, the great city of Rome, the mother of idolatry, the pattern of cruelty, the patroness of all impiety; and propagating all these by her power and policies, who calls herself *the mother church*, but is indeed *the mother of harlots*, and of all manner of *abominations*; that is, of abominable doctrines and practices.

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. 7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel: I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. 8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, (whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world,) when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

St. John proceeds in the description of this woman; he declared her to be a filthy and common whore in the foregoing verse; in this he represents her as a cruel and bloody whore; she is said to be *drunk, drunk with blood, drunk with holy blood, drunk with the blood of saints and martyrs*. Behold the blood-thirstiness of the Roman church, and her insatiableness therein, even unto drunkenness. Observe, 2. With what wonder and admiration St. John was filled, when he saw this woman drunk with blood, *I wondered with great admiration*; intimating, that so astonishing is the cruelty of that church, that it justly causes wonder and admiration to all that are not of her cruel and bloody disposition. I wonder that God should suffer so much of his dear servants' blood to be shed by her, and at her insatiable cruelty in shedding it. Observe, 3. How the Spirit of God was pleased to open this mystery, which indeed is the only vision of this nature expounded throughout the whole book. He begins first with a description of the beast, affirming that *he was, and is not, and yet is*; as if he had said, "The Roman empire was once Pagan, now is not Pagan, but Christian, and yet is as idolatrous now as it

was of old; the same it was, only in another form." Rome Papal is certainly as idolatrous, as cruel and bloody, as ever Rome Pagan was of old; yea, perhaps much more so beyond compare. Observe next, the rise and original is declared from whence this idolatrous church should spring, namely *out of the bottomless pit*, because her working is after the working of Satan, with all deceivableness, with signs and lying wonders. And as its rise is declared, so is its ruin foretold; *it shall go into perdition*, that is, shall be finally destroyed, never to revive again: but before this destruction the world shall be under such an insatiation, that the generality of the inhabitants of the earth, some few excepted, *shall wonder after the beast*; that is, be wonderfully taken with him, and shall follow him with an implicit faith, paying homage and subjection to him. But these admirers and adorers of the beast are only such whose names were not written in the book of life; intimating to us, that in the times of greatest apostasy, and most universal defection from the truth, the Lord wants not his own true church: he ever had, and has, yea, ever will have, a number to stand up for his name, and bear witness to his truth.

9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. 10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come: and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. 11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

Here the angel cometh directly to declare and unfold the mystery of the beast, promising first, that it requires heavenly wisdom in a person to understand it, and apply the marks accordingly. *Here is the mind that hath wisdom*, that is, the mind that hath wisdom may here exercise itself. The seven heads, saith the angel, are seven mountains, that is, signify seven mountains: a clear description of Rome, as to its local situation, being built upon seven hills. And there are seven kings, that is, seven forms of government, by, and according to, which Rome was governed, namely, by kings, consuls, tribunes, decemviri, dictators, and emperors, that were Pagans. Five of these were fallen in St. John's time, that is, utterly extinct, namely, the government by kings, consuls, tribunes, decemviri, and

dictators. *And one is, to wit, the government by Pagan emperors, which was in St. John's time in being. And the other is not yet come, that is, the government by Christian emperors was not yet in being, and when it did come, it held but a little while before the bishops of Rome wrested the government out of their hands, and took it into their own. Behold here! the great mutability of all earthly things; governments have their periods, kingdoms come to an end. Happy they who, serving God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, have secured to themselves a kingdom that cannot be moved! Heb. xii. 28.*

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet: but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. **13** These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. **14** These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

Observe here, the angel farther explains to St. John this great mystery of the beast; declaring that the *ten horns* of the beast do signify ten kings, which should employ their power with the beast, and in conjunction with his established idolatry, to uphold his bloody religion; next their wicked unity is declared in giving their power and strength to the beast: *They have one mind*, verse 13. that is, they unanimously concur in aiding, strengthening, and assisting the beast, in using their power, and employing their authority, to maintain him in his idolatrous and Pagan-like superstitions. Lastly, it is declared for what end they thus concur together, in giving their power and strength to the beast, namely, *to make war with the Lamb*; that is, to take part with antichrist, and oppose Christ in his truth and gospel, in his ministers and members, in his children and servants, *But the Lamb shall overcome them*. Some shall be converted by the power of the gospel, others shall be confounded, one way or other brought into subjection: for *he is Lord of lords, and King of kings*, that is, clothed with divine power. Christ though a meek Lamb, yet is a mighty Lord. The titles here given him show his godhead and omnipotency: and having such a power, he knows how to fit instruments for his purpose; and those whom he will make use of in this work, shall be chosen per-

sons, and faithful in the discharge of the trust committed to them. All that are faithful to Christ, shall share with him in his victory.

15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. **16** And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

Here the angel proceeds, and goes on farther in the explication of the vision. By the *waters* whereon the whore sat, he declares, are to be understood many and divers nations belonging to the Roman empire. Behold then of what church *multitude* is a note! Not of the church of Christ, his flock is a little flock; but of the antichristian synagogue which vaunts, that multitudes are on her side, *The waters whereon the whore sat are multitudes, peoples, nations, and tongues*. Alas, the multitude, or generality of persons, are prone to oppose that which is good, and those that do good. Next, it is declared what instruments God will make use of as the executioners of this vengeance upon this great whore, *the ten horns*, that is, the ten kings which did before idolize her, and commit idolatry and spiritual whoredom with her, shall at length revolt from her, hate her, *make her desolate, and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire*. Lord! what a strange, sudden, and mighty change, doth the power of converting grace make! Behold these ten kings, who sometimes doated upon the painted beauty of this great whore, when once their eyes shall be opened, their hearts will soon be alienated. Babylon's courts shall be crowded with suitors no longer; they shall make her *desolate*, by deserting her communion; make her *naked*, by withdrawing their former supplies afforded to her; they shall *eat her flesh*, feed themselves with spoils, and take her revenues to themselves; and burn her with *fire*, that is, shall utterly ruin and destroy her. The destruction of antichrist, once begun, shall hold on constantly, by degrees, till his final destruction.

17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

Observe here, 1. How the infinitely wise and perfectly holy God can, and does, so

order things, that all his judgments shall be executed by sinners, without his being the cause of any one of their sins; though by the permissive will of God, these kings gave their power for a time to the beast, yet they never had his approbation for so doing. God so over-rules the actions of wicked men, that when they are doing their will, contrary to their own intentions, in and by them, the Lord is likewise doing his will. God sometimes does his will by those who resolve they will not do his will. Observe, 2. The time when Almighty God, who permitted them to submit to the whore will put it into their hearts to hate her, and help to destroy her, namely, *when his word is fulfilled*. God's word shall be fulfilled in spite of Satan, and all his instruments; yea, the wicked are then fulfilling God's word and will, that is, his permissive will, when they are going on in their wickedness. *God hath put it in their hearts to fulfil his will.*

18 And the woman which thou sawest, is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

This is so clear a description of Rome, that the church of Rome herself acknowledges it: for if that be the city built upon seven hills, the city that allures the inhabitants of the earth to idolatry; if her idolatries be a lively image of the old Pagan idolatries; if to her many kings have given their power and strength; and if she reigneth over the kings of the earth; there remains no doubt but that this great city is Rome:—that Rome is mystical *Babylon*, which has shed the blood of saints and martyrs without number, and must be destroyed for so doing; no pomp nor grandeur can exempt or shall save her from the revenging hand of God, and his just indignation.

Lord! hasten that desirable time.

CHAP. XVIII.

This chapter contains a large and particular description of the certainty of Babylon's ruin; whose destruction is set out in expressions borrowed from the old prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who prophesied of the certainty, terribleness, and irrecoverableness, of old Babylon's ruin and destruction, unto which the Holy Ghost seems to allude throughout the whole chapter.

AND after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lighted with his glory. 2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of

every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

The destruction of spiritual *Babylon* hath in this prophecy been several times predicted and already foretold: now here an angel from heaven is employed to declare it shall certainly be performed. This angel is variously here described, 1. By the place from whence he came, namely, from heaven; signifying, that the destruction of *Babylon* was there surely decreed, and should most certainly be accomplished. 2. By the authority and power with which he came, in the name of, and by commission from, the great God, and *having great power*. A mighty angel is employed in this great and mighty work, to destroy *Babylon*, the mighty throne of antichrist. 3. By the effect of his appearance, *the earth was lightened with his glory*; denoting, that *Babylon's* destruction should be open and manifest, and matter of joy and glorious rejoicing both to heaven and earth. Learn hence, That as the destruction of *Babylon* is the work and office of an angel, under God, so is it unto the angels matter of joy and triumph; especially to such of them as are employed as officers therein. *I saw an angel come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory.* Observe, 2. The place against which the mighty angel doth denounce the vengeance of God, and that with an ingemination, or repetition of the threatening: *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen*; where, by *Babylon*, all, both papists and protestants, do understand the city of Rome, though in different respects. This is called mystical *Babylon*, in allusion to ancient *Babylon*, because of their resemblance, 1. In *sin*; namely, in pride and self-exaltation, in cruelty and oppression, in sorcery and witchcraft. See *Isa. li. 7.* 2. In *punishment*: the destruction of old *Babylon* was a sudden destruction, *Isa. xvii. 9*, and a perpetual destruction. See *Isa. xiii. 20*, compared with *Rev. xi. 10*, and *Rev. xviii. 9*. It is called *Babylon the great*, 1. Because of the greatness of its strength and glory; it was the strongest and most fortified place in the world. Cyrus besieged it thirteen years before he took it, and then by cutting channels, and drawing dry the river Euphrates. 2. In regard of her great power and dominion: literal *Babylon* said, and *Are not my princes altogether kings?* and mystical *Babylon* *ruleth over all the kings of the earth*. Farther, it is here said, that *Babylon the great is fallen, nay, it is ingeminated and repeated, is fallen, is fallen*; implying, 1. The certainty of her ruin; it is a speech of faith, speaking of things to come

as already past; God's punishments when threatened are as certain as if already inflicted. 2. It denotes the *suddenness* of her destruction, *She is fallen*, that is *subito ruitura*, she shall soon fall; as when Christ said of his suffering work, *It is finished*, he meant that it was very near finishing. It denotes her utter ruin and destruction, *is fallen, is fallen*, never to rise more: the church shall never more be tormented by her, or troubled with her. 4. It denotes the joy and rejoicing which will be found in Sion, at *Babylon's* downfall and destruction: *she is fallen, she is fallen*; it is not only a speech of faith and trust, but of joy and triumph. Learn hence, 1. That Rome or mystical *Babylon*, shall certainly fall, shall utterly fall, shall irrecoverably fall. 2. That the downfall of *Babylon* will be matter of great joy and triumph to the inhabitants of Sion, because she has been to the church of Christ an old and inveterate enemy, a cruel and bloody enemy, and shall be the last enemy. When *Babylon* is fallen, then shall all persecutions cease, Satan shall be bound, and the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ. Let all that have an interest in God, be instant in prayer with him to hasten its time, that it may be in the history as it is here in the prophecy, that *Babylon is fallen*. Observe lastly, what an heap of multiplied expressions the Holy Ghost is pleased to make use of, to set forth the utter ruin and final desolation of *Babylon*.—*She is become the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, a cage of every unclean and hateful bird*; that is, as devils and evil spirits are supposed to haunt desolate places, and birds which make hideous and dismal noises, do dwell in ruinous and ruined places: in like manner these expressions denote how entirely and absolutely God will bring about the destruction of *Babylon*, insomuch that the place which hath known her, shall know her no more, and her habitation shall be an eternal desolation, so that none that pass by shall say, *This is Babylon*.

3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

The Spirit of God is placed here to assign the reason and cause of *Babylon's* fatal ruin and final desolation; namely 1. Because all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornications. All nations, that

is, very many; the generality of the Roman empire have been allured to, and intoxicated by, her idolatries, which have brought all this wrath upon her and them. Where note, 1. How idolatry is compared to wine, because very pleasing to corrupt nature, and also very enticing and ensnaring, overtaking, like wine, a person unawares; and it is called *wine of wrath*, because it excite and provoketh God's wrath against a person or people guilty of it. 2. Because the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, that is, joined with her in her idolatrous worship. Where note, The policy of *Babylon* in drawing kings and princes to the bed of her fornications, well knowing how fast their example would be followed by inferiors. The example of superiors in doing evil is strangely powerful; Jeroboam made Israel to sin, not by commanding them to worship the golden calves, but commending that idolatrous worship to them in his own person. 3. Because the merchants of the earth were waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. By the merchants, understand all such as trade in *Babylon's* wares, her pleasing and costly wares of pardons, as masses and indulgences, by which so many were enriched. All things are vendible at Rome, any sin may be forgiven for silver, and a license for any thing that is unlawful for money. These are the reasons here assigned for *Babylon's* ruin. *The nations were made drunk by her, kings committed fornication with her, and the merchants enriched through the abundance of her delicacies*.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

Observe here, An admonition given, and a double reason assigned for that admonition. 1. The admonition itself; *Come out of her my people*, that is, come out of mystical *Babylon*, have no communion with that idolatrous church; abstain from all communicating with her in her sins, as ever you would approve yourselves to be my faithful people. Here note, it is not so much a local departure, as a moral separation, that is here intended; not so much from *Babylon's* local bounds, as from her abominable errors, superstitions, and idolatries. Learn hence, 1. That God has, and ever had, a people, even in *Babylon*. Learn, 2. That it is a special duty which God requires of his people, to depart from mystical *Babylon*, especially when her downfall is approaching. 3. That such a de-

parture from *Babylon* is no schismatical separation; it is not a departure from the true church, but the true church's separation from an idolatrous communion; and that by the express and positive command of God himself, *Come out of her my people*,—an allusion to the charge given with respect to *Babylon* of old, *Jer. li. 6, 9. We would have healed Babylon, but she would not be healed; forsake her.* Observe, 2. A double reason assigned for this admonition. 1. Because we are in danger of being partakers of her sins, namely, by incurring the guilt of her sins, and by contracting the spot and filth of her sins. 2. There is a danger also of being made partakers of her plagues: there is no safety in being near those who are under the curse of God; participation in sin will certainly cause a participation in judgment. How dreadful is this text to such as continue in, or apostatize unto, *Babylon's* idolatry and communion!

5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. 6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double. 7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. 8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

1. Observe here 1. The reason assigned why Almighty God inflicted such severe punishments upon *Babylon*, because her sins, that is, the cry and clamour of her sins, had reached up to heaven, the measure of her sins was filled up, and God had remembered her iniquities, that is, manifested his remembrance of them, by inflicting on her so great, so just, a punishment for them, viz. for her idolatry and persecution. Learn hence, That although sins be transient actions, yet they have a permanent pleading before the Lord's tribunal, to bring down judgments upon incorrigible sinners. And, 2. That although the justice of God may be thought to be asleep, and he may seem to be forgetful of sin and sinners, yet he will take his own time to manifest that he remembers them, by inflicting the heaviest of his judgments upon obdu-

rate sinners: *Her sins reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.* Observe, 2. The injunction and command given by God unto his people, to every one of them in their place and station, to contribute regularly all they can towards *Babylon's* downfall and destruction, *Reward her as she rewarded you, yea, double*; this is required, not from a private spirit of revenge, which Christianity expressly forbids, but as a public work, in an authoritative way and manner, out of an ardent zeal for the glory of God, and from a just indignation against her tyranny and idolatry; and the command to double unto her double, implies that a double punishment is due unto her, yea, a just one, according to her works. Behold here! what bloody persecutors may at length expect, namely, to receive at the Lord's hand double for all their sins. *Babylon's* punishment shall be double, respecting what she has acted, but not double in respect of what she has deserved; if possible, let her have as much blood again to drink as ever she spilt, for one drop of the blood of *Sion* is more worth than an ocean of the blood of *Babylon*: give her therefore double, for though it be more in quantity, it is nothing so much in value. Observe, 3. How suitable and unanswerable *Babylon's* punishment inflicted will be to her sin committed; her sins were pride and insolence, luxury and voluptuousness. Note, 1. Her pride; she said in her heart, *I sit as a queen.* Mark, she did not barely say, *I am a queen*, but *I sit as a queen*; as if she had said, "I am not only in a high place, but in a sure place: I have a warm and a firm seat, I am well settled, I have a great command, yea, an uncontrollable command, *I am no widow*; no desolate widow, no disconsolate widow, for I have many children to comfort me, many sons and daughters to support me; *I shall see no sorrow*, I neither feel nor fear any." Behold how worldly men fancy to themselves an everlastingness in worldly things; they fancy themselves sitting as upon down pillows for ease and softness, and as upon rocks of adamant for sureness and unmovableness, *I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow.* Note, 2. Her luxury and voluptuousness, she lived deliciously, in pompous palaces, pleasantly situated, plentifully furnished, and her judgment bears a strict proportion to her sin, *How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her*; the justice of God will exact all the arrears of abused mercy. Sinners that now fare deliciously every day, shall pass from their good things here, to the flames which live by the breath of God's revenging wrath. Ah! doleful exchange! one hour's feeling

of that fire will be more tormenting than an age's enjoyment of this world's delight can be pleasing. Observe, 4. The equity, the celerity, and multiplicity of *Babylon's* punishments; their equity is intimated in the illative particle *therefore*, that is, because of her former sins her plagues shall come; the celerity and swiftness of her punishment is intimated, they shall come upon her in one day, as did *Sodom's* plagues, suddenly and unexpectedly; and the multiplicity and variety of her plagues is particularly here expressed; *death*, for putting the saints to death; *mourning*, for her former rejoicing; *famine*, for famishing God's people; and *burning*, for having burnt so many of the bodies of the holy martyrs to a coal. *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy judgments.* Observe lastly, The reason here assigned for the unavoidableness of all these plagues coming upon *Babylon*—*for strong is the Lord who judgeth her.* True, *Babylon* has all natural power and all civil strength on her side; but the strong God is against her, it is his controversy with her, and he is able to effect what he pleaseth, how incredible soever the thing may seem to us: sooner may the ark and *Dagon* be reconciled, and cease to be adverse, than God can be at peace with *Babylon*; *Strong is the Lord who judgeth her.*

9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, 10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, *Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!* for in one hour is thy judgment come.

The Spirit of God having in the former part of the chapter set forth the certainty and severity of those judgments which should come upon mystical *Babylon*, he next declares what wallings and bitter lamentations her downfall would occasion to her votaries and admirers, to her friends and followers; more particularly he acquaints us with three sorts of persons that shall bewail *Babylon's* destruction, kings, merchants, and seamen: the former we have here before us in these two verses: *The kings of the earth*, who have adhered to the whore, committed spiritual fornication with her, and delighted themselves in her carnal and pompous idol-worship, when they see the smoke of her burning, and understand the certainty of her destruction, they shall stand afar off, like persons astonished, and like persons afraid, amazed at the dreadfulfulness of the judgment, and

afraid to come near, lest they be involved in it; and the words of their lamentation are here set down, *Alas, alas! that great city Babylon; in one hour is her judgment come!* As if they had said, "Notwithstanding all *Babylon's* grandeur, which we so admired and magnified, and which she herself put so much trust and confidence in, to our astonishment we behold, in one hour, her judgment come upon her; a great and mighty city destroyed, a gay and splendid church, politically founded, powerfully strengthened, on a sudden broken in pieces, and brought to desolation: *Alas, alas! that great city Babylon!* Learn hence, That when God begins to enter into judgment with his church's enemies, the strongest arm of flesh cannot avail, but kings with their armies will flee and be discomfited, the stoutest hearts will be afraid and terrified, not daring to approach the presence of an angry God: *the kings of the earth shall stand afar off for fear of her torment.*

11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandize any more: 12 *The merchandize of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble.* 13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and ~~fine~~ flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. 14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. 15 *The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing.* 16 And saying, *Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!* 17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought.—

The second sort of persons who passionately lament and bitterly bewail *Babylon's* downfall and destruction, are the mer-

chants who traded in and with *Babylon*. Here we have an allusion to the merchants and merchandize of Tyre spoken of, *Ezek. xvii*. As Tyre was the mart of the earth for temporal things, so was *Babylon* for spiritual things; making merchandize even of the souls of men, persuading people that they could purchase the redemption of souls out of purgatory by masses. Here note, That Pagan Rome, though she did traffic for slaves, yet not for souls: but Papal Rome deals for both. She sells also the souls of men, by selling her ecclesiastical benefices, and cure of souls. And I would to God that this piece of spiritual merchandize were only found amongst them, and not heard of elsewhere. Observe next, The Holy Ghost is pleased to enumerate at last several sorts of wares, and the kinds of merchandize, which *Babylon*, dealt and trafficked in, namely, *gold, silver, precious stones, fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet*; all things for ornament, necessity, and delight; the pride and sensuality of Rome prompted her to buy up all sorts of commodities, and took off all that the countries round about could bring in; partly to gratify her pride, and partly to serve her idolatry. Observe farther, What a bitter lamentation is here taken up; but for what? not for their sins, their luxury, or idolatry, but for the loss of their market and merchandize only. Behold in these Babylonians, the spirit and temper of all natural men, they weep not for sin, but for sufferings: for any temporal cross they have tears enough, they refuse to be comforted: but for their sins, which are not their cross, but their curse, their plague, yea, the greatest of all plagues, because spiritual, these they can speak of with dry eyes and unaffected hearts. Observe lastly, How these merchants here, as the kings before, stand afar off for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing; pitying and condoling one another, greatly affected and sorely afflicted to see the ruin of that polity that sustained them, but not able to help one another. Behold! how fruitless and helpless the wicked's friendship is to one another in the day of visitation; they stand afar off for fear of torments, but can afford no succour to each other: they durst not come near to help *Babylon* or them.

—And every ship-master, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, 18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! 19 And they cast dust on their

heads, and cried, weeping, and wailing, saying, Alas, alas! that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

The last sort of mourners for *Babylon's* ruin are sailors and seamen; all spiritual seamen that have an oar in St. Peter's boat shall lament greatly, whose life and livelihood did depend upon the merchant trade of that great city; these, though they stuck close to her, and trafficked with her in the day of her prosperity, yet now with the rest they stand afar off from her, lamenting her ruin, and their own loss, in the day when her desolation cometh. And, as an evidence of the greatness of their sorrow and mourning, they are here said to cast dust on their heads; which amongst the ancients was used as a special token of extraordinary grief and sorrow, *Job ii. 12*. In a time of deep affliction we may express our outward sorrows by our outward gestures: those mourners for *Babylon* express their sorrow for her and themselves, by casting dust upon their heads.

20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

Note here, 1. That as *Babylon's* ruin was matter of great grief and sorrow to the fore-mentioned mourners who merchandized and traded with her; so it is matter of great joy and rejoicing to all spiritual and heavenly-minded persons, which are the true church, who are commanded to rejoice at it. Rejoice over her, O heaven; that is, ye angels in heaven, or ye saints, that are of an heavenly disposition. And all ye holy apostles and prophets: that is, all faithful ministers who succeed them, who are endued with the same spirit, and teach the same pure and holy doctrine with them. Note, 2. The cause of this rejoicing declared: For God hath avenged them upon her. The church does not, the saints of God dare not, rejoice at *Babylon's* calamity as such, but as an act of divine vengeance God will be avenged on *Babylon* for the doctrine of the gospel corrupted by her, and for the rules of worship violated by her, and for all the barbarities and indignities which his church and people have suffered from her: God will revenge the wrongs of his people, when through want of power they cannot, and through his prohibition they may not, avenge themselves.

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast

it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. 22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee: and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; 23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee: and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride, shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

Observe here, 1. *Babylon's* utter desolation represented by the type and sign of a millstone cast into the sea; like a millstone she had ground and oppressed the church of God, and now, like a millstone thrown into the sea, she sinks into the pit of destruction. Almighty God, by this sign or symbol, signified to St. John that *Babylon's* ruin should be violent, irrecoverable, and irreparable; she falls never to rise more. The casting of a stone into the sea was anciently the emblem of everlasting forgetfulness. Observe, 2. The amplification of *Babylon's* ruin particularized in several instances. 1. That nothing should evermore be found in her that belonged to pleasure or delight: *no voice of harpers, musicians, or trumpeters.* 2. Nothing which belonged to profit or trading, no artificers or craftsmen. 3. Nothing belonging to food, no noise of a millstone for grinding corn and making provision for bread. 4. Nothing to relieve against the darkness and terror of the night; *as the light of a candle.* 5. No means for the propagation of mankind by marriage; *The voice of the bride and the bridegroom shall be heard no more.* All which expressions do imply extreme destruction and utter desolation: intimating, that *Babylon* shall be a place utterly abandoned and forsaken. Observe, 3. A threefold cause assigned for all this, to wit, 1. Damnable covetousness: *Her merchants were the great ones of the earth.* Her sinful way of merchandizing, by dealing in spiritual commodities peculiar to Rome, seems to be here pointed at; her making merchandise of the souls of men, as we have it, *verse 13.* 2. Her bewitching idola-

try, called here *sorceries*, whereby she enticed people to join with her in her superstitious worship. 3. Her cruelty and bloodshed: *In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that were slain upon earth.* *Quest.* But how can the blood shed by others be laid to her charge? *Ans.* 1. Because the doctrines which caused their blood to be shed were with her. 2. Because her jurisdiction gave commission to slay the saints which were slain in other kingdoms. 3. Because by the influence of her example at home, much blood had been shed abroad. God will charge upon others, as he did upon *Babylon*, not only the sin which they have acted, but all the sin which they have been accessory to.

CHAP. XIX.

The foregoing chapter reported to us the final downfall and destruction of *Babylon*, never to rise more, together with the bitter lamentation of her friends and votaries upon that mournful occasion.

This chapter before us represents the great joy and rejoicing upon that which was found both in heaven and earth, when it pleased the holy and just God to pour forth the vials of his wrath and vengeance upon that inveterate and bloody enemy of his church and people. A choir of singers is here found praising God, as *ver. 1.* informs us.

AND after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

Note here, That the first which sing this song of thanksgiving for *Babylon's* destruction are glorified saints, called here *much people in heaven*; and they are said to sing with a *great voice*, expressing thereby their united zeal and fervent affection in this duty of thanksgiving, and they begin their song with an Hebrew word, *Alleluia*, which is a word of excitation, and signifies, *laud ye the Lord.* Some think that hereby the Christian church do invite the Jews or Hebrews to join with them in praising God, and that after *Babylon's* overthrow Christ shall be solemnly praised, as by the Gentile so by the Jewish church; the tenor of their song is much the same with that which we had before, chap. vii. 10. to wit, *Salvation*, or deliverance from all evils, spiritual and temporal, (particularly from those which the church suffered under *Babylon's* tyranny,) *and glory, and honour, and power, be ascribed unto the Lord our God,* and to him alone, who is the author of all good, and hath manifested his great power in destroying our enemies. Learn hence, 1. That the church's salvation is entirely from God, and the special effect of his divine power. 2. That to him, upon that account,

all possible honour and glory is due, as having shown himself his people's God: *Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, be unto the Lord our God.*

2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of her servants at her hand. 3 And again they said Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

Observe here, 1. The cause assigned and set down for this their doxology and solemn thanksgivings, namely, the truth and faithfulness, as also the justice and righteousness, of God in the execution of his judgments upon *Babylon*; his truth appeared in performing the threatening which *Babylon* despised, and his righteousness in suiting his judgments inflicted upon her, to the sins of idolatry and bloodshed committed by her. Observe, 2. The title here given to *Babylon*, she is called the *whore*, because of her idolatry, which is often in scripture styled *spiritual whoredom*; and the *great whore*, because of her universal corrupting the whole earth: she made others to sin, and cruelly murdered those who would not sin. Hence learn, That idolatry and persecution constantly go together. *Babylon's* idolatrous practices were accompanied with bloody cruelties. Observe, 3. An intimation given of the irreparable ruin and irrecoverable destruction of *Babylon*,—*her smoke rose up for ever and ever*, that is, God followed her with a succession of plagues and judgments until she was ruined past recovery. Observe, 4. That the word *Alleluia*, as it begins the song, so does it also close the same; to show thereby the raisedness of the church's affections, and their unweariedness in praising God for this deliverance of *Babylon's* destruction.

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. 5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

Note here, 1. How the whole heavenly choir praise God on the fore-mentioned account, acknowledging the justice of his proceeding against *Babylon*; and, 2. An invitation is here given to all the saints upon earth, both small and great, to fear and praise him. Whence note, How the

church triumphant and militant, the saints in heaven and Christians on earth, jointly give praise to God, and glorify him for this great work, adoring his divine justice in destroying *Babylon*, the mother of idolatry, the nest of luxury, the seat of oppression and cruelty; it is a duty well becoming the saints, both small and great, to celebrate the praises of God for the equity of his judgments upon his church's incorrigible and unreclaimable enemies; and here God himself, and his ministers, call upon the whole church to join in this solemn work of praise and thanksgiving: *A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, and the four and twenty elders, and the four beasts fell down and worshipped.*

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. 7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white. For the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

In the former verses an exhortation was given to all the saints to abound in the duty of thanksgiving; here we find them unanimously addressing themselves to the practice and performance of that duty; and accordingly they are called here *a great multitude, their voice like many waters* for unity, and *like mighty thunderings*, denoting that zeal and fervour which is in their thanksgivings. Where note, How exceedingly the church doth rejoice and triumph, not so much in *Babylon's* ruin, as in the glory of God advanced, and as his own kingdom is promoted by it. Observe, 2. A superadded ground and reason for this extraordinary joy and rejoicing, *For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready*. By the marriage of the Lamb, Mr. Mede and Dr. More do understand the conversion of the Jews; by the *Lamb's wife*, the nation of the Jews, so called in regard of that relation which they stand in to God, by virtue of the covenant; and she is said to have *made herself ready*, namely, by the wedding-garment of faith, to accept of her formerly despised Bridegroom. Note, that it is probably conjectured by some, that the conversion of the Jews shall soon follow the destruction of antichrist, for his idolatry and persecu-

tion are great scandals to the Jews, and mighty stumbling-blocks in the way of their conversion. And whereas it is added, *that it was granted to her to be arrayed in fine linen*, the words do seem to import, that the Jews shall in due time be brought in to Christ, to submit to his righteousness, and be clothed with it, and that an holy emulation shall be found between the Gentiles and them, which shall most and best adorn the profession of the gospel. From the whole note, How the church is called Christ's wife. Christ and she are here betrothed each to other, but at the great day the marriage will be consummated. Note farther, The church's spiritual nakedness in herself considered, *It was granted to her to be arrayed in fine linen*; she had it not of herself, but it was put on by Christ; he decks and dresses his own bride with the ornaments of grace here, and glory hereafter, that he may *present it to himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, holy, and without blemish*.

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. 10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, *See thou do it not*; I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Blessed are they which are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb; that is, (say they, who understand, by the marriage of the Lamb, the conversion of the Jews,) who shall live in the happy time, when the Jews being converted shall with the Gentiles make up one glorious gospel church. But the marriage is one thing, and the marriage-supper another; the marriage-supper follows the marriage; so that the kingdom of glory rather seems here intended: blessed are they which are called to it, being made meet and prepared for it, by grace here, and glory hereafter: we must be made meet for heaven before we can be admitted into heaven. *Blessed are they which are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb*. Observe next, That St. John being overjoyed at the good news of his countrymen's (the Jews') conversion, fell down at the angel's feet to worship him, as Cornelius did at St. Peter's, when he heard of the conversion of the Gentiles, Acts x. 25. *And I fell at his feet to worship him*. The

holiest and best of saints are not wholly free from passionate infirmities: he would now have worshipped this angel, yet we read not of any attempt made to worship any of the former angels which conversed with him. This makes it probable that he apprehended it to be an uncreated angel, even the Son of God, which now talked with him. Observe next, With what indignation this holy angel rejected the offer of religious adoration, and how peremptorily he forbids it: *Ops mi, By no means, upon no terms do it, See thou do it not*. The church of Rome asks us, Why we reprove them for worshipping the angels, when St. John himself did it? Our answer is ready, That St. John himself was reproved for it: the angel rejected it as none of his due. O the presumption of those men, who dare do that which the angel expressly forbids to be done! Yet, after all, Bellarmine says, That St. John did well to worship the angel; then, say we, the angel did ill to reprove St. John; but whether we shall believe a cardinal at Rome, or an angel of God, judge ye. Observe lastly, The reasons assigned by the angel who forbade it. 1. Because God, and God alone, is the sole and proper object of religious worship: *Worship thou God*. 2. Because the angel was St. John's equal in office, though not in nature: *I am thy fellow-servant*. As if he had said, "Those who serve and worship God together with you, must not be worshipped by you: those who are fellow-servants to one master, should not give to one another that worship which is only due to their Lord and Master. *But we are fellow-servants*; how doth that appear! Thus: you have the testimony of Jesus, and I have the spirit of prophecy. Now the spirit of prophecy, and the work of the ministry in testifying of Jesus, being of the same nature and kind of service, therefore from those that are employed in one of them, religious worship is not due to the other. It is Christ that employs us both, and therefore he alone is to be worshipped, and neither I nor thou: *Worship God*, to whom religious worship is justly and peculiarly due."

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself; 13 And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and

his name is called, The word of God.

14 And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Here we have a new and fresh vision, in which St John saw heaven opened, and Christ represented as a great and victorious general, marching forth with a glorious army for his church's enemies' full and final destruction. This great general is first described from the place whence he comes, namely, from heaven; he is no earthly prince or potentate, but an heavenly monarch. Next he is said to sit on a *white horse*, denoting victory, prosperity, and success; *He is called faithful, and true, and righteous*, because faithful in all his promises, true in his threatenings, righteous in all his dispensations towards his enemies; he will do them no wrong. Next, *his eyes* are said to be as a flame of fire: denoting his clear and piercing knowledge, and also his terror as a judge, his eyes being in wrath as a flame of fire, ready to consume his enemies. And farther, to show his royal dignity, it is added, *on his head were many crowns*, which also denoted his many victories over his many and mighty enemies. And by the name which no man knew but himself, some understand the nature and essence, which is so incomprehensible and unsearchable, as that none but he who is true God is able to comprehend it fully, or reveal it perfectly. Others by his name understand his judgments and ways, by which he is known, as a man by his name. Observe next, This great and mighty general is described from *his vesture dipped in blood*, which denotes the mighty overthrow of his enemies: the cruellest and proudest of them can expect nothing in the end from him, but extremity of wrath and deserved destruction, for they must all become his footstool. And his name being called the *word of God*, speaks dread and terror to antichrist, who slanders, opposes, corrupts, and suppresses, and offers all manner of indignities to the word of God; exercises the utmost cruelties against the preachers and professors of it. Observe farther, That after the de-

scription of this great and mighty general, follows next the description of his *army*, his attendants and followers, namely, the holy angels and glorified saints, *ver. 14* these also ride upon *white horses*, as their general before them, and are clothed in *fine linen, white and clean*. Behold the comely conformity, and purity, and holiness, between the general and his soldiers, between Christ and his followers; they both appear on white horses, suitable to one another. Christ will admit none to be his followers that are not like him. Next we have the *weapon* described, *ver. 15* which Christ makes use of for the destruction of antichrist, and all his church's enemies; and that is, a *sword, a sharp sword*, the holy scriptures, particularly the threatenings of the word, with which he will smite all the wicked nations that side with antichrist against him and his kingdom; dealing with his enemies as men do with grapes gathered into a wine-press, which they can easily crush. Lastly, He is described by a new name of royal dignity and supreme power, being called *King of kings and Lord of lords*. And this name is said to be written on his *vesture* and on his *thigh*, partly for perspicuity, that all might take notice of it; and partly for permanency, to show that as long as himself lasts, which is for ever, so long shall his kingdom and dominion over all endure.

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun: and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all *men, both free and bond*, both small and great.

After the description of the general and his army, follows next the event and success of the battle, which is a prodigious slaughter of the church's enemies: and as eagles and vultures, and other birds of prey, do attend an army, and flock where the slain lie, in like manner Almighty God here invites the fowls of the air to sup upon the carcasses of his slain enemies. Antichrist would not suffer the dead bodies of the witnesses to be buried, but to be cast out, and lie in the streets; and here God metes to him the same measure; their carcasses also shall be a supper for the birds

and fowls of the air. *Come to the supper of the great God, to the slaughter of antichrist and his adherents.* Where note, That by calling it a supper, two things may be probably intended. 1. The facility and easiness of the victory: that Christ's and his church's enemies will not put him hard to it to overcome them; as we proverbially say, they will be but a supper to him, or a breakfast for him. The word *supper* seems to import, that this shall be the last effort, the last great opposition, that antichrist and the church's enemies shall ever make against Christ to the end of the world, as the supper is the last meal of the day.

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the remnant were slain with the words of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Observe here, 1. The final issue of this great battle, namely, The total ruin of all the enemies of the church: the beast and false prophet were taken, and cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. Behold the punishment of idolaters and idolatry; the false prophet had cheated credulous princes and peoples, with his pretended miracles, into idolatry; he had cast others into a bed of fornication, and God casts him into a bed of flames. Lastly, It is added concerning the remnant, that they were slain with the sword of his mouth: that is, by Christ's judicial sentence they were righteously adjudged to be slain, and, when they were so, all the fowls were filled with their flesh. Where note, That these persons were not excused because they followed their leaders, and did what they bade them; Christ commands, for all that, that they also should be slain. Lord! how vain will the plea of many sinners be at the great day; we followed our guides, we did as we saw others do before us; Remember we, that God has given us a rule to walk by, the infallible and inflexible rule of his word: and neither the example of the

most, nor of the best, must influence us to act contrary thereunto; for if we will do as the most do, we must be contented to go where the most go, even into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

CHAP. XX.

AND I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

This chapter begins with a fresh and glorious vision which St. John had of an angel's descending from heaven, to bind Satan for a thousand years; and herein we have observable, 1. The person binding, the angel of the covenant, Christ Jesus (for he only has the keys of the bottomless pit, of hell, and of death, Rev. i. 18. This angel is here said to come down from heaven, and with a great chain in his hand, denoting his omnipotent power and sovereignty over Satan, and his ability to restrain him. Observe, 2. The person bound, Satan; where mark, that he is set forth here by five names, he is called the *Dragon*, the *Serpent*, the *Old Serpent*, the *Devil*, and *Satan*. And note, Christ's power is set forth in as many terms as the devil has titles, he is said to lay hold on him, to bind him, to cast him into the bottomless pit, to shut him in, or seal him up for a thousand years, that is, to restrain him and render him incapable of doing such mischief to the world as he had done before. Observe, 3. What we are to understand by Christ's binding Satan: some thereby do understand Christ's overthrowing the power of the devil in the heathen world; his casting down those strong holds of Satan, to wit, ignorance, superstition, idolatry, and lying oracles, by the light and power of the gospel, preached among the Gentiles; his ousting of Satan, that he should no more cosen the world with heathenish delusions as he had done. Others understand this binding of Satan to be after the destruction of antichrist; when the Jews shall be converted, and there shall follow a quiet and peaceable state of the church for a long

and reserved thereunto, but the actual and final execution thereof is suspended until the end come.

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Here is another vision which St. John saw, namely, a lively representation of the great day of judgment, when all, both good and bad, that ever lived, shall be raised and sentenced according to their works: the state of the wicked is set forth in this chapter, and the happy condition of the righteous in heaven gloriously described in the two next chapters. Observe here,

1. The judge described as sitting upon a throne, or seat of judgment; a *throne*, to denote that this judge is a king; and a *white throne*, to denote the purity and righteousness of this judge; and a *great white throne*, because erected for a great Judge, and for a great service, namely, the judging of the whole world. Observe, 2. The dreadful majesty and glorious power of this judge declared, that neither heaven nor earth are able to abide his presence, but are said to *flee away*, and that *there was no place found for them*. Observe, 3. The persons judged are here described, and that, 1. By their condition and qualification, all the dead, both small and great; all that ever lived, and all that shall then be found alive. 2. By their posture, they stand before the judge, whilst he sits to show his authority. 3. By the manner of proceeding, which is represented as being after the form of well-ordered judicatories here on earth; wherein the books are produced, namely, the book of God's omniscience, and the book of conscience, the book of the law, and the book of the

gospel. They that had not the written law, shall be judged by the law of nature; they that had the written law are to be judged by that; and they that had the gospel, to be judged by that; and every one according to their works. Observe, 4. The execution of the sentence of this great judge upon the wicked and impenitent world; they are cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. From the whole learn, 1. That it is certain that there shall, and necessary that there should, be a day of judgment. 2. That in that day there will be no exemption of any persons from the examination of the judge. *I saw all the dead, small and great, stand before God*. 3. That Jesus Christ, called here *God*, (which clearly proves his deity,) shall come in the clouds to judge the world; and will then be found such a judge as the riches of the wealthiest cannot bribe; such a judge as the power of the mightiest cannot daunt; such a judge as the subtlety of the wisest cannot elude; such a judge as there is no appealing from, no repealing of, his sentence. Learn, 4. That as the same person shall be judged, who formerly lived, so in the same bodies that died, and were either buried in the earth, or consumed in the sea. *The sea gave up her dead*; by which understand all places, though attended with never so many improbable circumstances of a resurrection, shall yet give up the dead. *Death and hell*, that is, death and the grave, *gave up the dead which were in them*; that is, by the power of God were made to restore them. Learn, 2. That the sentence denounced will be according to every man's work at the great day; according to the nature and quality of the wicked man's works shall his judgment and punishment be; according to the sincerity, not according to the imperfection, of the righteous man's works, shall his reward be. God grant that the consideration of this may so far influence us, that no profit may tempt us, no pleasure entice us, no power embolden us, no privacy encourage us, to do that thing, of which we cannot give a good account in the day of judgment.

CHAP. XXI.

In the conclusion of the foregoing chapter St. John had a vision of the day of judgment, and the execution of the sentence on the wicked was briefly declared and set down: in this chapter he has a vision of the New Jerusalem, the holy city, out of which all the wicked are excluded, and the excellencies thereof are more largely insisted upon, for the consolation of the righteous; concerning which he thus speaks:

AND I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and

the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

By the new heaven and the new earth here, all understand a new state and face of the church; but some apply it to the state of the church militant here upon earth, and others to the state of the church triumphant in heaven. Accordingly they take the new heaven and the new earth to be the effect of that great change which shall be made by fire at the universal conflagration; and they are called *new*, not so much in regard to substance, as in respect of qualities, being now for nature more stable, and for beauty more glorious. *Quest.* But what use shall there be of this new heaven and new earth? and who shall dwell therein? *Ans.* We cannot tell, but must rest satisfied with what God has told us, that therein *shall dwell righteousness*; that it shall be a standing monument of God's power and greatness. It is added, *that the first heaven and the first earth were passed away*; not by annihilation, but by a qualitative mutation. *And no more sea*; that is say some, as it was before, turbulent, changeable, subject to corruption and vanity; say others, no more troublesome state of things, which is oft-times signified by the sea. A new and glorious state of things was undoubtedly here designed relating to the church. Observe next, The character St. John gives of the glorious state of the church triumphant, *ver.* 3. He compares her, 1. To a beautiful city, for amplitude and largeness, for compact structure, and for commodious habitation; she is called *holy*, because no unclean thing can enter into her, and because that holiness shall there be perfected which was here begun. 2. To an adorned bride; no spouse on her marriage-day so adorned as she was. The church in heaven is so called, to denote her dignity, and the love which Christ bears to her, and the delight which he takes in her, which is so continual, as if it were always a wedding-day; and she is adorned for him, and adorned by him, with spiritual beauty and glory, and perfection of grace.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their

eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Observable is that variety of expressions which the Holy Ghost here makes use of, to set forth the excellency of the church triumphant by. 1. She is blessed with God's immediate presence and abode, of which the tabernacle was a sign; the Lord manifesting himself in heaven unto his saints in a more immediate way than ever he did unto them here on earth, *the Tabernacle of God is with men*; and to show the permanency of this privilege, it is added, *He shall dwell with them*; after an inhabitation here by grace, shall follow a cohabitation hereafter in glory. Next it is said, *They shall be his people and he will be their God*; which must not be so understood as if that relation did now begin between them, but the comfort of that relation is now perfectly understood, and they reap the complete advantage of that covenant-promise, whose sweetness they did only taste before. 2. Having described the positive good which the triumphant church shall eternally rest in; St. John next sets forth the primitive evils which they shall everlastingly be freed from. All sorrow, and all the causes of sorrow, shall be removed; they shall have no outward occasion, nor inward disposition to weep: there shall be no more death, but immortality and eternal life; nor any more pain or sickness, but pleasure for evermore. Lord! what a sovereign cordial is this against all our present sorrows and sufferings! to consider the time is at hand when all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, all sorrows, and the causes of sorrow, banished from our hearts, and everlasting joys shall possess our souls, and we shall be with our Lord for ever, to obey him with vigour, to praise him with cheerfulness, to love him above measure, to fear him without torment, to serve him without interruption or distraction, and be perfectly like unto him, as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality!

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful. 6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

Note, here, 1. How these new heavens and new earth come to be effected and

made, namely, by the omnipotent power of Christ, *Behold I make all things new*; a good argument to encourage us to go unto Christ by prayer for renewing grace. Surely he that makes new heavens can make new hearts; he that renews an old world, can renew us in the spirit of our minds, and make old things pass away, and cause all things to become new. Next he commands St. John to write, that these words set down here, and throughout this prophecy, are *true and faithful*. We see then that the holy scriptures were written at the Lord's command, and therefore from him they do derive their authority. Observe, 2. The word of assurance here uttered by Christ, for the confirmation of what he had before declared and promised, *He said unto me, It is done*; signifying thereby, that it is as certain as if it was already done; namely, whatever he had promised relating to his church's happiness, and all that he had threatened relating to her enemies' destruction; let not the Church then at any time stagger in her faith. Observe, 3. The title which Christ is pleased here to resume, which before was given by himself, chap. i. 8. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end*; to show, that, as he first made the world, so he was now about to put a period to it, and would give to every thirsty or believing soul an everlasting life in the new Jerusalem, which shall no more decay than water, which is an ever-springing fountain, can be dried up.

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

Observe here, 1. That our design of happiness must be accompanied with endeavours after it, or they will be ineffectual; to thirsting in the former verse, he joins overcoming in this verse: we must not barely wish, but work; not only talk, but fight; and not only fight but overcome our spiritual enemies in fighting, or we are miserable; how strong soever our desires after happiness may be supposed to be, without proportionable endeavours we can have no good ground of hope. Observe, 2. *He that overcometh*, that is, he that is overcoming, he that daily maintains the combat, though he has not yet obtained a perfect conquest over his spiritual enemies, yet he keeps the field with sword in hand, resolving never to throw down his weapon, but to die as a conqueror, rather than be taken a prisoner. Observe, 3. The encouraging promise given to the conqueror, *He shall inherit all things*. Where note, The extent and latitude of the promise, the enjoying *all things*, that is, all blessings and

benefits, all joys and comforts, that are requisite to make him perfectly and perpetually happy. Note also, God's way and manner of dispensing the mercy promised, and that is, by free gift, *he shall inherit all things*, not merit any thing; an inheritance is *gratuitum paterni amoris pignus*, an estate freely given by the father to his children. Observe, 4. A superadded promise, *I will be his God, and he shall be my son*; that is, I will give him the manifestation of his adoption before angels and men: I am now his God, and he is now my son, but the world knoweth it not; they brand my people for a generation of hypocrites, and sometimes they call in question their own sincerity, and their title to the privilege of adoption; but at the great day I will publicly own them before angels and men, and make it appear that I love them as a father, and they shall live with me as sons for ever and ever: *He that overcometh, &c.*

8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

After a description given of the celestial happiness of the righteous at the day of judgment, here follows the eternally miserable condition of the wicked; and eight several sorts of sinners are here summed up, who shall be excluded out of heaven, and cast into hell, namely, the *fearful*, such as dare not own Christ, or for fear of suffering, have disowned him, or apostatized and revolted from him; *unbelievers*, such especially as have sat under the dispensation of the gospel, but have rejected our Lord Jesus Christ, and have refused to come unto him that they might have life; the *abominable*, such as live in the practice of sins against nature, sodomy, and such uncleanness as renders them abominable in the sight of God and man, *Rom. i. 26*; *murderers*, such as destroy either the soul, body, or good name, of their neighbours, especially persecutors; the *whore* and her followers, who are drunk with the blood of the saints; *whoremongers* of all sorts, both spiritual and corporal, particularly such as are guilty of uncleanness in a conjugal state; *sorcerers*, such as exercise witchcraft, consult with the devil, and trade with familiar spirits; *idolaters* of all sorts and kinds, such as worship false gods, or the true God after a false manner; covetous persons, who make the world their god; and sensual persons, who make their belly their

god; lastly, all *liars*, those which lie with the lip, and talk falsely; those that lie in their lives, as all hypocrites do, whose practice gives their profession the lie; those who are the inventors of the doctrine of lies, which is no better than the doctrine of devils; these, all these, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, that is, in exquisite torments, and everlasting. From the whole note, 1. How the timorous and fearful stand in the front of all those vile sinners, whose ways lead down to the chambers of death and hell. Behold here! God's martial law executed upon cowards and renegadoes, whose fear makes them revolt from Christ in time of danger. Think of this, all you timorous and faint-hearted professors! who cannot bear the thought of lying in a nasty dungeon for owning Christ, how will you endure to lie in a lake of fire and brimstone for disowning of him! Is not the little finger of an angry God heavier than the joins of all the tyrants and persecutors in the world? Note, 2. That although eight sorts of sinners only are here reckoned up, yet all others who live and die impenitently in any known sin, besides these, of what kind soever, are certainly included, and their damnation implied also, as well as these: for whoever lives in the habitual practice of any known sin, without converting from it unto God, is certainly in a state of damnation. Note lastly, That the sins here mentioned must not be understood copulatively, but disjunctively: we must not suppose that such as are guilty of all the before-mentioned sins, are the persons threatened with hell-fire; but such as are with allowance guilty of any one of these, or of any other besides these, and continuing impenitently in them.

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. 10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, 11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal; 12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the

twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

St. John. having delivered, before, a general account of the saints' happiness in heaven, descends here to a more particular description of it. Heaven, called the New Jerusalem, is represented by a city, with magnificent gates and walls; and the church, the collective body of glorified saints, is here called the Lamb's wife, espoused before, but the marriage solemnized now. Note here, That as the earthly Jerusalem was a type of the church militant, so the church triumphant is called the New Jerusalem, and compared to a great city for the multitude of its members, and styled holy, because sanctity is the special qualification of those who are the inhabitants of it. Note, 2. The light which is found in this city; it is not compared to the light of the sun, for that is attended with scorching heat, nor to the light of the moon, which is variable and uncertain, but to the light of precious stones, which is clear and pure, and has nothing annoying in it. Note, 3. The great safety and security of this city, and of all the citizens inhabiting therein: here is a wall great and high; walls are for defence, (called *munia a muniendo*), and the higher the wall the greater the defence: God's omnipotency is as a wall, and will be an invincible bulwark about his saints in heaven: nothing shall endanger them, nothing shall offend them. Note, 4. Here are twelve gates for conveniency of entrance into this city on all sides, and to give free and easy access from all parts, east, west, north, and south; to signify that the church in heaven will be made up of persons coming from all parts, as Christ foretold, *Matt. viii. 11. Luke xiii. 29*. They shall come from the east, &c. and shall sit down with Abraham. The triumphant church is a collective body of believers of all nations, kindreds, and people, tongues and languages. Note lastly, That as the names of workmen are sometimes set upon foundation stones, by which it is well known in after-ages who were the builders; in like manner it is here intimated, that as the ancient Jewish church was founded in twelve patriarchs, so the latter Christian church in and by twelve apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, or the foundation of both; he being *fundamentum fundans, they fundamenta fun-*

ate; teaching us that our faith must be built upon the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, and upon no other doctrine whatsoever, though it has a pretended stamp of infallibility upon it.

15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: The length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal. 17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

Still St. John proceeds in the description of the heavenly state, and the church triumphant in it; this is called a *city*, in respect of its magnificent building, comely order, and invincible strength; a *great city*, in regard of its largeness and capaciousness, being full of glorified saints and angels; and Jerusalem, because of that everlasting peace which is there enjoyed, as the Hebrew word signifies; and here an account is given of the measuring of this great city: we read of its measuring before, chap. ix. but differently from its measuring now; then it was measured by a man, now by an angel; then by an ordinary reed, now by a golden reed; intimating the transcendency of the state of the church now to what it was before, and representing the firmness, perfection, and greatness, of the new Jerusalem. Here note, An observable difference in the measuring of the church militant and of the church triumphant: the church militant, upon a just measure by the reed of the word is found unequal in its parts, some parts of it are purer and better than others, but in the New Jerusalem all parts are equal in perfection and purity; the length is as large as the breadth, and the height equal to either: the church of Christ in heaven shall be exceeding large and great, perfect and complete, nothing shall be found irregular in it, all things can there endure the measuring reed, and abide the exactest trial.

18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. 19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all man-

ner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald: 20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

Some will have all this to signify and represent the purest state of the church here upon earth; but if there shall be any state on this side eternity which answereth this glorious representation, how much more will the perfect glorious church in heaven fully answer it; What was said of Jerusalem of old may be truly spoken of the New Jerusalem above, *Psalm lxxxvii. 3.* *Very excellent things are spoken of thee thou city of God: her pavement of gold, her gates of pearl, her walls of precious stones, denoting the durability and permanency of the saints' happiness, the delight and satisfaction that accompany it, and the resplendent glory of it; as gold excels all metals, and is not subject to corruption, as precious stones are full of splendour and glory, in like manner will the mansions of heaven be most glorious, the conversation there pure and incorrupt, affording saints such an entire satisfaction as entirely exceeds all that the most rich and glorious things of this world can afford for the gratification of the outward senses.*

22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. 23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. 26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. 27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh

abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Observe here, 1. St. John declares that the new Jerusalem shall not want either those spiritual supplies or natural advantages which Jerusalem below stood in need of; no need of any temple there for external worship and ordinances which it is our duty to wait upon God in here: What need of an house of prayer for them that want nothing to pray for? What need of ministers and ordinances, to teach them whose knowledge is perfected? What need of sacraments to remember Christ in and by, when they shall always see Christ face to face? Again, what need of the natural light of the sun and moon, where the sun of righteousness for ever shineth, and where God is all in all! Happy they that enjoy him, for they enjoy all good in him and by him, he being the fountain of all goodness! Observe, 2. Having thus described the city, St. John next declares who shall be the citizens, namely, the nations that are saved, all believing Jews and converted Gentiles, called elsewhere *the general assembly and church of the first-born*, which are a great multitude; these shall be admitted into it, and partake of the glory and happiness of it; and whereas it is added, that *kings do bring their glory and honour into it*, this is not to be so understood as if there would be a distinction in heaven between kings and subjects; no, all the saints there are kings and priests unto God; neither is it meant that kings shall carry their earthly glory and honour with them into heaven; but that kings who shall be so happy as to go thither, shall see all their honour and glory swallowed up in the glory and happiness of that place and state, and shall confess that all their crowns are infinitely short of the crown of glory, and that their thrones are daughills compared with the dignity of this throne. Observe, 3. It is declared what perfect security and peace the saints enjoy in the New Jerusalem, together with their glory, riches, and happiness; this is signified, ver. 25. *The gates shall not be shut at all by day, and there is no night to shut them in; the gates shall be open, to show their peaceable state and secure tranquillity, without fear of any hostile invasion or entry of enemies, either by force or fraud; it is added, there shall be no night there, either in a literal or a metaphorical sense, no darkness, no interruption of happiness, nor fear of danger, nothing that can either disturb or disquiet.* Observe, 4. Who the persons are that shall be everlastingly debarred the enjoyment

of this happiness—all that have defiled themselves by lust and uncleanness, every person that hath not by holiness of heart and life separated himself from sin and wickedness, and dedicated himself to God and his service; *nothing that defileth, nothing that worketh abomination*; no open scandalous sinner, or he that maketh a lie, shall be admitted; to tell a lie is bad, but to make a lie is much worse, this is the devil's sin in a special manner, it is his by temptation, it is his by approbation, it is his by practice, he is a liar, and the father of lies and liars; it were well if our customary liars would consider it. The sum of all is, "That without grace and holiness here, there can be no expectation of glory and happiness hereafter; this fits at once for the employment of heaven, and the enjoyments of heaven, it makes meet for the inheritance in light: and if we have not our present *fruit unto holiness*, our end can never be *everlasting life*."

CHAP. XXII.

AND he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

St. John in this and the four following verses, goes on with the description of the heavenly Jerusalem, which he had begun in the former chapter; and here we have observable, 1. The city described, as having a *clear river* running through it, and this of the *water of life*; an allusion doubtless to the earthly paradise, Gen. ii. which was well watered, without which accommodation no place can be happy; the heavenly paradise here, or the New Jerusalem, is said to have a pure river of water in it, denoting the pure and unmixed joys of heaven, and those *rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore*. Here is not a well of water, but a river, not a muddy or feculent water, but *clear as crystal*, not corruptible or dead, but living water, *water of life*. Observe, 2. The head or spring of this river declared, from whence it doth arise; not from the hills, which may be cut off, diverted, or dried up, but it proceeds out of the *throne of God and of the Lamb*, and therefore can no more fail than God and Christ can fail; no river can fail, unless the springs that feed it fail; the saints in heaven shall be refreshed with such consolations as flow from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and their comforts cannot fail until they fail. *He shewed me a pure river, &c. proceeding out of the throne of God.*

2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.

Note here, 1. That as there was a river and a tree of life in the terrestrial paradise, so in allusion thereunto both are said to be in the heavenly paradise; behold here a tree of such vast proportion and extent, that its branches extend to both sides, that all may receive benefit by it; who can this agree with but Jesus Christ, who is called *a tree of life*, because from him we have our natural, our spiritual, and our eternal life! from this tree do bud forth all the fruits of grace and comfort, and that for all seasons and conditions. In Christ, 1. Our souls have all necessities for food and physic. *Its leaves are for healing, as well as its fruits for food.* 2. All variety of fruits, called here *twelve manner of fruits*, that is, variety of graces, and comforts of all sorts. 3. In him are these fruits at all times: this tree bears fruit every month, winter fruits as well as summer fruits, even in the black month of sickness and death. Christ is continually distributing of his divine fulness to the satisfaction of his people; he is all in all, in the enjoyment of mercy; he is all in all, in the want of mercy; he is all, in order to his people's salvation; and he is all in their glorification. *Quest.* But will there be any need either of food or physic in heaven? if not, what need of the fruits of this tree for food, or of its leaves for healing? *Ans.* We cannot suppose that in the heavenly state there will be any want either of meat or medicines, any hunger that shall require food, or any sickness to stand in need of physic; but as food and physic are the instrumental means of the preservation of natural life, without which it will certainly and suddenly decay; In like manner our Lord Jesus Christ doth not only give spiritual life unto his people, but he is the conserving cause of it, he doth maintain, and will preserve it, without the least decay, to all eternity: thus are the *leaves of this tree for the healing of the nations.*

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: 4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. 5 And there shall be no night there: and they need no candle,

neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

St. John has not yet done with this copious description of the New Jerusalem, but here he closes it by doing these two things, 1. He shows what shall not be found there: *there shall be no curse*, no accursed person, or accursed thing, no sin, nor any thing sinful, that deserves the curse; *and there shall be no night there*, no darkness of ignorance or error, or darkness of affliction, temptation, or desertion, no night of natural darkness, no night of spiritual darkness, much less of eternal darkness, which is the portion of the wicked: farther, there shall be no need of natural light, the light of the sun; no need of artificial light, the light of a candle; no need of the spiritual light of the word and ordinances, all which shall then and there cease. 2. He shows what there shall be there, namely, 1. *The throne of God and the Lamb*, that is, the glorious and everlasting presence of God and Christ, as on a throne of royal majesty, insomuch that the name of the city may be *Jehovah Shammah*, the Lord is there. 2. It is added, that *his servants shall serve him*, that is the glorious angels and glorified saints shall continually stand before him, and administer unto him, not spend their eternity in a perpetual gazing upon God, but executing his commands, obeying him with vigour, praising him with cheerfulness, loving him above measure, fearing him without torment, trusting him without despondency, serving him without lassitude and weariness, without interruption or distraction, praising God, and singing eternal hallelujah's to the Lamb for ever and ever. 3. It is declared that *they shall see God's face*, which imports fruition as well as vision of him, together with a sweet and satisfactory delectation in him. *St. Matt. v. 8. Heb. xii. 14. Blessed are the pure in heart, and holy in life, for they shall see God:* that is, have a clear and apprehensive, though not a full and comprehensive, knowledge of him. 4. *His name shall be in their foreheads:* his name, that is, his holy nature, his image and likeness, by which they shall be known, as a man is by his name: an allusion probably to the high-priest, who had holiness to the Lord written on his frontlet; or a reflection upon the worshippers of the beast, who have his name on their foreheads; in like manner the name of God shall be on his servants' foreheads; they are thankful for imperfect lineaments there, but shall be satisfied with his likeness then and there. Lastly, It is closed with this, *they shall reign for ever and*

ever, not for a thousand years, as the militant church is said to reign on earth after antichrist's destruction, but for eternal ages, and this not partially, but fully and completely, when all their spiritual enemies, sin, Satan, and the world, yea, death itself, shall be put under their feet, and that for ever. From the whole learn, That when we are at any time dejected upon the account of our dark and imperfect knowledge, or afflicted upon the occasion of many wearisome nights and days of sin and sorrow, of trouble and temptation, of misery and desertion, which we have here on earth, let this meditation comfort us, that the happy day is coming, when there shall be no night, but an eternal sabbath of rest, light, and life, with plenty of all good things, even fulness of joy and rivers of pleasure for evermore.

O Lord, the well of life so pure
Doth ever flow from thee,
And in thy light thy saints are sure
Eternal light to see.

—The Lord giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

6 And he said unto me, *These sayings are faithful and true*: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. 7 Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. 8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. 9 Then saith he unto me, *See thou do it not*: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

The prophetic part of this book being now ended, here follows the conclusion, which is managed in a way of dialogue, between Christ, the angel, and the apostle. Note here, 1. How the divine authority of this book is strongly asserted, and its excellences commended: *These sayings are faithful and true*: that is, all things contained in this book of prophecies are certain, and infallibly true. The Holy Spirit of God foresaw that this book would be more questioned than other books of holy scripture, therefore he confirms the divine authority of it by an holy angel, and the truth of all things in it, and especially that which relates to the happiness of the saints in

heaven, the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, with a frequent assertion, viz. *These sayings are faithful and true*. It is added, *they shall shortly be done*; this is spoken of the beginning of their accomplishment, they shall begin to be fulfilled, and to take effect, and shall receive their full and final accomplishment in due time. Behold here in Christ's omniscience an evident proof of his divinity; he knows all things to come, as well as all things past: and whereas Christ says, *these things shall shortly be done*; we learn, That the time of the church's suffering is a limited time, it is a short time, after which shall follow an eternal deliverance, and a great reward. Observe farther, That Christ subjoins a promise and assurance of the certainty and suddenness of his coming to judgment, for the support of his church, during the short time of her sufferings and services, *Behold, I come quickly*; next he pronounces them blessed who keep the word of this book, not only in memory and profession, but in practice and performance. Observe lastly, The sincerity of St. John, the penman of this book: he leaves here upon record his relapse into that error into which he had fallen before, chap. xix. 10. The good man relates his own sin; yea, records his relapse into the same sin, once and again, which, as it discovers that he preferred the glory of God before his own reputation, so it evidently declares that a holy man may possibly relapse into the same sin through inadvertency, or the power of a temptation, and how much it is the duty of every one that thinketh he standeth, to take heed lest he fall. Of St. John's weakness in worshipping the angel, see the notes on chap. xix. 10. as also the angel's answer, *Worship God*: as much as if he had said, "Thou mistakest the object of thine adoration, I am a created being, and can accept of no such homage as this, which is peculiarly due to the great Creator."

10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. 11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

Observe here, 1. A strict charge given unto St. John, not to seal or close up the words of this prophecy, but to publish and make it known for the use and benefit of the church, for which reason this book is called a revelation: *Seal not the sayings of*

the prophecy of this book. Where mark, That although this book be the obscurest part of the scripture, yet it is Christ's command that it should not be concealed from the knowledge of the people: how sacrilegious then is the practice of the church of Rome in robbing the common people of all the scriptures, locking them up in an unknown tongue, and forbidding the people to read the same! Observe, 2. How the Holy Ghost here pre-occupates an objection, which St. John might be ready to make, "If I seal not up, but make known this prophecy, the wicked men of the world, persecutors especially, will be made worse by it; they will be unjust still, and filthy still, and more so than ever." Be it so, says he, yet the righteous will be more confirmed in their course of obedience: and such as are holy, will be holy still, and such as are righteous, will be righteous still. There is, we see, a dangerous perseverance in sin, as well as a desirable perseverance in grace and holiness; let him that is unclean, be unclean still. Where mark, this is no permission, much less a persuasion, to sin, but a dreadful threatening or commination, that such as give up themselves to sinning, shall be judicially given up by God to sin as a punishment; such a liberty as this to sin, is the worst of bondage. Again, he that is holy, let him be holy still; the words carry with them not only the force of a command, and the direction of a rule, but the sweetness of a promise, and a gracious privilege that they shall persevere in holiness unto the end.

12 And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

The former verses contained a dialogue or interlocutory discourse between the angel and St. John: here Christ begins to speak, and continues his speech to the middle of the 20th verse, wherein he declares, that it will not be long before he comes to judge the world, to give unto those who are good everlasting happiness, and to them that are evil everlasting punishment. Here observe, 1. An excitation, *Behold!* 2. The celestial object, Christ Jesus, *I come quickly.* And, 3. The end of his coming, *My reward is with me to render to every one according to his works.* Learn hence, 1 That the notices of our Lord's coming to judgment, are usually, in scripture, ushered in with great solemnity, with a mark of attention and observation; this word, *Behold*, is generally prefixed and set

before; thus, Jude 7. *Behold! the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all.* So the apostle James gives an awful admonition, *Behold! the judge standeth before the door, ready to pass a final sentence.* And St. John in this book of the Revelation seldom speaks of Christ's coming, but he breaks forth into an ecstasy of admiration: *Behold! he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him.* Learn, 2. That the special distribution of rewards and punishments is reserved until the second coming and appearance of Jesus Christ: *My reward is with me to give to every man according to his work.* Learn, 3. That it is our wisdom and duty to represent, by actual and solemn thoughts, the certain and speedy coming of Christ to the righteous judgment of the world: *I come; behold, I come; behold, I come quickly, to render unto every man according to his works.*

13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. 14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

As if Christ had said, "I am the eternal God, the first cause and the last end of all things; I first made the world, and I will at last put a period to it; and when time shall be no more, they shall for ever be happy in the enjoyment of me, who have here obeyed me, and lived in conformity to my doctrine and example; they shall through holiness enter the gates of the New Jerusalem, that glorious city, having the tree of life in it; present blessedness, as well as future happiness, belongs to those that obey God's will, and keep his commandments; *blessed are they, and blessed for ever shall they be.*"

15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

Without, that is, without the gates of the city of the New Jerusalem, are all filthy and unclean sinners, all cruel and bloody persecutors, all raging and furious enemies to me and my people, all idolaters and all liars; these shall be shut out of heaven, as dogs are shut out of the house; and shut into hell, to be imprisoned with devils and damned spirits, and that everlastingly, to lie for ever in that mysterious fire, whose strange property it is always to torture, but never to kill, or always to

kill but never to consume: they would die, but they cannot die; they seek for death, but cannot find it; they desire it, but it flies from them.

16 I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

Observe here, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the author of this Revelation, and owneth it to be his; the angel did but declare it, St. John did but write it, Christ himself was the inditer of it; they were not the inventions of St. John, nor the sayings of the angel, but the revelation was Christ's; which leaves all men inexcusable who believe not the same, but question the divine authority thereof. Observe, 2. The titles here by Christ given of himself, 1. The root of David, that is, as God, from whom by creation David and all mankind had their being, and did spring. 2. The offspring of David, according to his humanity; Christ as God was the root of David: but considered as man, David was the root of Christ, Isa. xi. 1. *There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.* 3. Christ styles himself the bright morning star, that is, the light of the world, enlightening and enlivening the new creation; the fountain of all knowledge, grace, and comfort, on earth, and of all glory and happiness in heaven. As the morning star first brings light to the world, so Christ first published the light of the gospel, and now, by this revelation, gives a superadded light to his people, informing them what shall befall his church until his second coming to judgment.

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come; And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Observe here, 1. The persons mentioned, *The Spirit and the bride*; by the Spirit understand the Holy Ghost, and by the bride the whole Catholic church in general, both in heaven and earth, and every true believer in particular. Behold how the Spirit speaks in the bride, and how the bride speaks from and by the Spirit. Christ by his Spirit is present with her, by his influence he is assistant to her. Observe, 2. The title here given to the church, she is called Christ's *bride*, and he elsewhere called her *bridegroom*; now this title of a *bride* given to her, is, 1. A title of eminency

and excellency, and stands in opposition to adultery: she is a *bride*, not a *whore*; the false church is not a *bride*, but the *whore*, and so often called: she desires not Christ's coming, no more than an adulteress desires the return of her husband; but the *bride*, being a chaste virgin, longs for it. 2. As the word *bride* is a word of excellency, as it stands in opposition to adultery; so is it a word of extenuation and diminution, as it stands in a distinction from matrimony and complete marriage; it is the *bride*, not a married wife. The saints are contracted to Christ in this world; the marriage is near, and shall be consummated in the next. A bride is a spouse on the confines of marriage, near the approaches of the conjugal solemnity. Blessed be God! it will not be long before Christ and his church, Christ and every believer, who are now betrothed and espoused, shall be fully and completely married, and in the perfect enjoyment of each other. Observe, 3. The affection which this *bride* expresses towards her bridegroom; she says, *Come*, she passionately and impatiently desires, and vehemently longs for his coming. *Come*, is a word of invitation; "I pray come, it is my earnest suit and request that thou wouldest come." Learn hence, That the glorious coming and appearance of Jesus Christ to judgment, is vehemently desired and earnestly longed for by all believers. The Spirit in the *bride*, and the *bride* by the Spirit, say, *Come*. Observe, 4. The invitation of access returned by Christ, the *bride* says, *Come*; says Christ, *Let him that is athirst come*; we must first come to Christ by faith and repentance, before we can ever desire Christ's coming to us by death and judgment. Observe lastly, The intimation given by Christ of a gracious acceptance, and a grateful entertainment: *Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.* Here note, 1. The benefit mentioned or the mercy offered, water of life, all grace here, and glory hereafter; grace, as it leads to glory, and glory as it follows upon grace: grace carries life in the bosom of it, even eternal life. Note, 2. The persons to whom this benefit is offered and tendered, that is, to *whosoever will*, to show that salvation is not forced upon us against our wills, but bestowed us in the use of our faculties, and in the exercise of our own endeavours; we are the subjects of this willingness, but God is the author of it, Psal. cx. 3. *Certum est nos velle, cum volumus; sed Deus facit ut volumus; præbendo vires efficacissimas voluntati*: says St. Austin. Note, 3. The offer itself, *let him take it freely*: grace is the free gift of God, as well as eternal life. Such is God's munificence

and royalty, that he will not sell his good things; if he did, such is our indigence and poverty that we could never buy them; therefore, says God, *take freely*. Yet must we understand it only of a freedom from merit, not a freedom from endeavour. God's offers in the gospel are conditional; he proffers his Son, and all good with him, but upon condition of our acceptance on his own terms. Let none then straiten the grace of God, where he has enlarged it. If a man has a mind to keep his sins, he shall have no mercy, he they never so small; but if he be willing to leave his sins, and to accept an offered Saviour, as offered, he shall not be excluded from mercy, be they never so great; for, says Christ, *Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely*.

18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Here we have a dreadful commination and severe threatening denounced by Christ against all such as shall add any thing to the scriptures in general, and to this prophecy in particular; not by way of true interpretation, but either *formally*, by joining any thing to be received as scripture which God never revealed to be such; or *virtually*, by putting such a sense and meaning upon scripture as God never intended, and the words cannot rationally bear. Almighty God here declares, that he will add to such his plagues, and shut them out of the holy city, the New Jerusalem, the kingdom of heaven: and if so, learn we what great guilt the church of Rome contracts, and what a dreadful curse she lies under, by making oral tradition of equal authority with the scriptures, and by adding new articles of faith, new points of doctrine: which is, in effect, to accuse God of ignorance or inadvertency. True, the doctrine of christianity is a tradition; it was delivered by Christ to the apostles, and by the apostles to their successors; but now they being long since dead, we cannot receive from them the doctrine of life by word of mouth, but must stick to the scriptures or written word, for these things were written for our sake. But if any man

shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. We reject not all traditions, because scripture itself is a tradition; but we blame the church of Rome, and deservedly sure, for making her private unwritten traditions of equal authority with the scriptures, and for urging that they ought to be received *pari pietatis affectu*, with the same pious affection with which we receive the holy scriptures. And thus they set their post by God's post, and equal their traditions with the doctrines of faith: their opinion is bad, but their practice is worse; for they value their own traditions above the scriptures, and prefer them before the scriptures; they never called their own traditions "a nose of wax, a dead letter, a dumb rule, an obscure doctrine;" but in this manner have they stigmatized the holy scriptures; and how they will escape Christ's severe commination here before us, for adding to, and taking from, the word of God, concerns them to look to it; for they must certainly answer for it at the bar of God.

20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.

That is, Jesus Christ, the faithful and true Witness, from whom St. John received this revelation, as he formerly had done the holy gospel, saith, *Surely I come quickly*. Where note, 1. That this prophecy or promise of Christ's second coming to judge the world, is here left as Christ's last word upon record; it is almost the last word in the Bible, doubtless, that it might be seriously minded and frequently remembered by us. Christ had in this chapter twice before, namely, at ver. 7. and 12. testified that he came quickly; yet he repeats it here again, to excite us to prepare for it, and to live continually in the expectation of it. Note, That as Christ has three several times in this chapter given us the assurance of the certainty of his coming, so he prefixes an, *Ecce*, or *Behold*, before it, *Behold! I come quickly*: and here he prefixes the word *surely* before it, *Surely I come quickly*, to awaken the security, and leave the incredulity of sinners without excuse, who live as if they did not believe any such day would come.

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

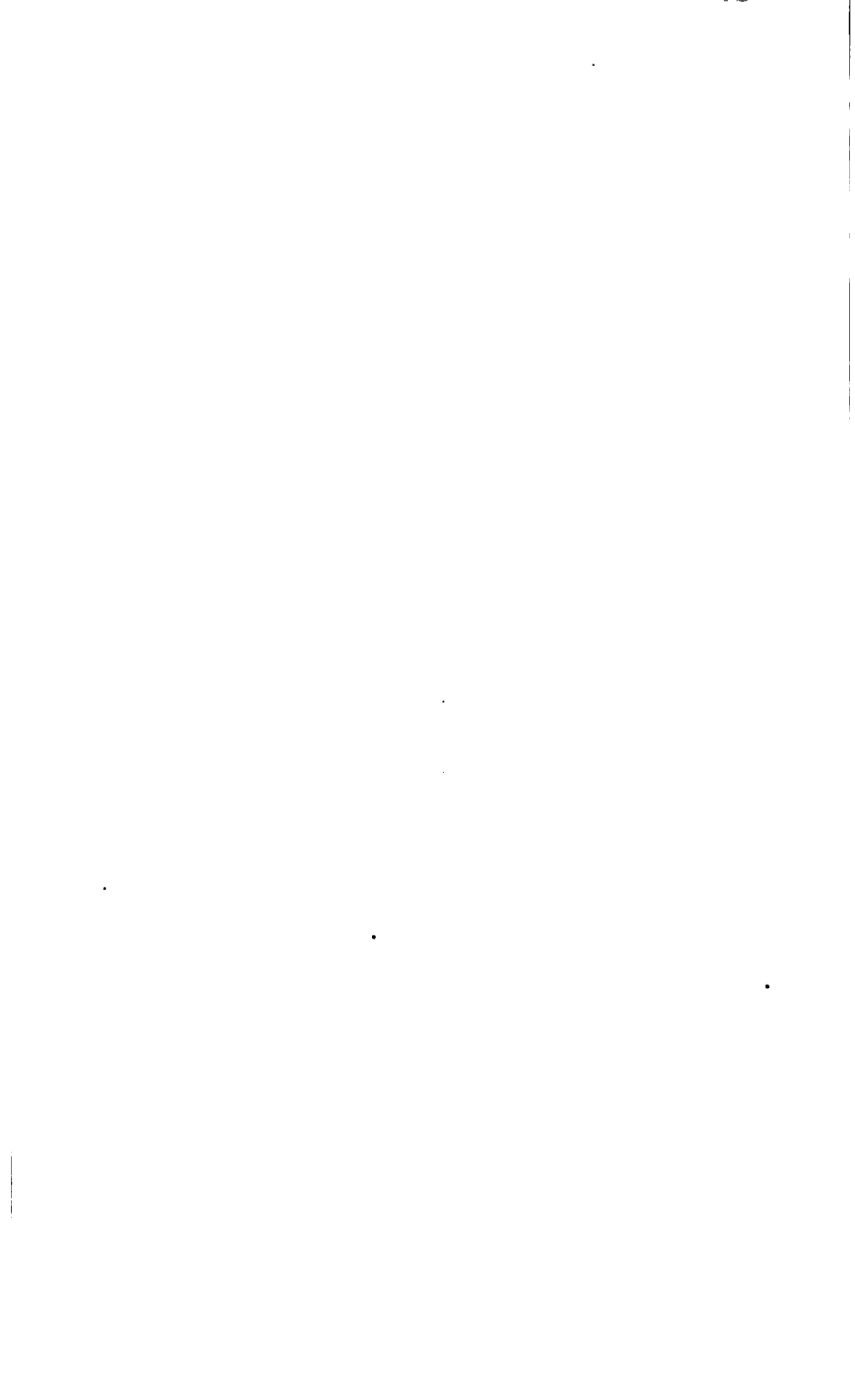
To the fore-mentioned assurance of the certainty of our Saviour's coming, St. John, in the name of the whole church, subjoins a hearty *Amen*, an earnest wish, a passionate desire and longing for our Lord's coming, saying, *Even so, come, Lord Jesus*, as thou has promised, and thy people long expected. Learn hence, 1. That the com-

ing of Christ to judgment is a truth firmly believed, and earnestly desired by all good christians. St. John here, in the name of the church, takes, as it were, the word out of Christ's mouth like a quick echo, and presently improves the promise into a prayer. Christ's farewell word to his church is, *I come quickly*: the church's farewell suit to Christ is, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly*. *Quest.* But why is Christ's second coming so exceedingly desired by his church and children? *Ans.* For finishing the days of sinning, and destroying the works of Satan; for accomplishing the number of his own elect, and for hastening his kingdom; for freeing the creature from subjection to vanity; for manifesting the glory of his justice and mercy, and for putting his saints into the full and final possession of their promised inheritance. *Learn, 2.* That it is the unfeigned desire of God's faithful servants, to have the full fruition of Jesus Christ; this is the habitual desire of their hearts, that Christ would come, and receive them to himself, though at the same time they may tremble at some circumstances of his coming: there is a degree of sinful bondage, which hinders much our spiritual confidence and boldness; but the more holy we are, the more emboldened we shall be against the day of judgment.

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

This is an epistolary conclusion, used almost in all the epistles of the New Testament, and so here, because this prophecy was in the manner of an epistle directed to the churches. St. John began this epistle with this salutation, chap. i. 4. and so ends with it here; he knew there would be a long tract of time intervening between the giving of the promise and the fulfilling of it, between the bride's making herself ready, and the day wherein the marriage was to be solemnized; he well knew that before the consummation of all things, there were many sad dispensations which the churches would certainly meet with, many false doctrines would be spread, many duties to be performed, many afflictions to be endured, all which would require an extraordinary assistance and special grace; therefore he prays that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with them all; teaching us incessantly to desire for ourselves, and to crave for others the auxiliary aids of divine grace, to enable to the acceptable performance of every duty, and to the patient enduring of every trial. The greatest mercy that can be wished to any, or that any can wish for themselves is the grace of God, to excite and quicken us to our duty, and to assist and help us in the performance of it; and accordingly St. John shuts up this book, and therewith the canon of the whole scripture, in these words, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

THE END.









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